



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“Whereas the lives of millions of young children have been touched by the devotion and professionalism of librarians; Whereas there are currently more than 117,000 public libraries nationwide that serve a diverse clientele...”

-From House Resolution 597, 108th Congress, 2D session, “Congratulating the American Library Association (ALA) as it celebrates its first annual National Library Workers Day on April 20, 2004

I recently received an ALA-APA (the Organization for the Advancement of Library Workers) email inviting me to submit a star for National Library Workers Day on April 17, 2007. I had no idea what they were talking about, so I followed the link and came to a site that proclaimed: “Submit a Star/See the Stars.” There a brief sentence encouraged everyone – library users, students, children, colleagues, faculty, and management – to nominate a favorite library worker to be a Library Star (www.ala-apa.org).

I have mixed feelings about these kinds of promotions. My first reaction is reluctance to be a part of something that formalizes appreciation – it seems like it should be left to each of us to do privately and in our own ways. And yet, since the daily work of librarians is critical but not always noted, I was willing to find our more. I was curious, too, about the stars that have already been nominated and so I followed the next

link to a page called “See the Stars.”

I was astonished to find 24 pages of names, with descriptions of varying lengths. As usual when talking about people who work in libraries, most of those mentioned are women. They come from a range of libraries, from school libraries to public to academic ones. The reason for each nomination is given; some descriptions are short and to the point, others go on and on. They are inspiring to read and all together they give insight into the kind of work library workers all across the United States are doing every day.

Here are a few examples:

“Peggy from a public library in Colfax, WA, is a Star because of her innovative program of outreach education to the 14 rural school districts served by WCL...”

“Billie Jo from an academic library in McKenzie, TN, is a Star because Billie Jo carries the load of four library staff, and does so with a smile, a hug, and bright laugh...”

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“Alan from a public library in New Orleans, LA, is a Star because he was one of the last librarians to evacuate and the first (and only) Hurricane Katrina Relief Librarian ‘Katrinalibrarian’ hired at California State University in 2005-06.”

“Amanda from an academic library in Conway, AR, is a Star because she treats everyone the same!”

“Vickie from a school library in Centennial, CO, is a star because in education we find ourselves describing what things might be like in a perfect world. To work in a perfect school, to be the perfect teachers, to teach the perfect student. While very few perfect situations exist today, our library is fortunate to have one in our library clerk, Vickie Coon.”

“John from a school library in Pinetops, NC, is a Star because he takes his work very seriously...He’s a great sixth grader!”

According to the email, “National Library Workers Day is a day for library staff, users, administrators and Friends groups to recognize the valuable contributions made by all library workers.” If you have a

favorite library person, this is your chance to let her – or him – know you have noticed. The names of these Library Stars will be featured on the National Library Workers Day site for one year and they will also be honored in June this year at the ALA annual convention in Washington D.C. The last day for nominations is April 17.