

Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

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Press Release – For Immediate Release

Amytha Willard, Supervising Librarian, Bookmobile Services at Santa Clara County (CA) Library District, is the recipient of the 2021 ABOS Karen Hake Outstanding Bookmobile Librarian Award. The Karen Hake Outstanding Bookmobile Librarian Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services, is presented annually to a bookmobile manager, supervisor, or MLIS librarian in recognition of their continuous dedication and commitment to the bookmobile profession. The Karen Hake Outstanding Bookmobile Librarian Award was established in 2021 in recognition of Karen Hake’s fifty years of exceptional service to the bookmobile profession at the Platte County Library System in Columbus, Nebraska.

Bookmobile librarians around the world deserve a multitude of accolades for their commitment, passion and vision. Amytha Willard’s unwavering passion, innovation, and dedication to providing excellent bookmobile service is a shining example. Over 16 years ago, Amytha began her career with the Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) Bookmobile right out of library school. Now leading the Bookmobile department as Supervising Librarian, Amytha and her team are committed to providing access, remove barriers, and offer inclusive library service to diverse and resilient communities.

Santa Clara County is home to 1.9 million residents. SCCLD libraries serve nine cities while the Bookmobile provides service to the farthest areas of our County including unincorporated areas. Amytha and her team drive two large vehicles, covering 1,000 square miles of the County with over 100 stops a month. Amytha was an integral design team member for the library’s newest Bookmobile vehicle. The Bookmobile team provides library service to those most in need and introduces the importance of reading and life-long learning, improving the well-being of the community, one individual at a time. Bookmobile services thrive and grow under Amytha’s enthusiastic leadership, creativity and collaborative spirit. Amytha builds relationships through critical partnerships. Amytha and her team ensure that patron needs are met at each stop with the right collection, programs and resources. Community members served by the Bookmobile include migrant camps, senior facilities, military families, Family Literacy Centers, and preschools.

To further instill a love of reading, Amytha works with local organizations to build Little Free Libraries in our unincorporated areas so books are always available. Amytha ensures that the Bookmobile stars in many local parades, fairs and community events making sure that everyone knows about SCCLD.

Four years ago, SCCLD launched the first Lunch in the Library program partnering with Second Harvest Food Bank and thousands of lunches have been served to help ensure children have access to a free, nutritious lunch outside of the school year. Amytha took this one step further by utilizing Bookmobile and partnering with the San Martin Lion's Club to offer free lunch to a remote area that was most in need, serving meals to low income children and their families.

During COVID-19, Amytha developed and implemented BookDash, a contactless home-delivery solution to meet a need for a growing senior community and for those who could not get to a library during the pandemic, due to family illness, injury, medical condition, or disability. The SCCLD Bookmobile team delivers books right to a patron's front door. BookDash modernized, optimized and streamlined homebound service from 5 patrons to over 60 patrons with a capacity to deliver to up to 144 patrons per month. Amytha is always thinking about how the library can offer better service in more effective ways.

Amytha has presented at ALA, CLA, PLA and ABOS. Amytha is chair of CLA Interest Group Mobile-Library-Service and facilitator for Mobile Libraries and Outreach Networking Conversations.

Marlene Iwamoto, Library Services Manager, Organizational Development & Partnerships at the Santa Clara County Library District, shares that, "Amytha has a passion and commitment to library service with a highly people-focused approach to leadership and a record of leading through staff engagement. Amytha is always willing to step in and step up. Her collaborative spirit, caring attitude, commitment to patrons and desire to make things better at all levels is to be commended. Amytha's dedication and passion comes from a genuine desire to help those who are most vulnerable, bring joy to others, and a commitment to share the love of reading and bring the library to our communities. Amytha continues to make an indelible impression on all those who have the privilege of meeting her and fortunately for all of us, she has chosen to make Bookmobile and Outreach services her life's work; and she is just getting started!"

The Karen Hake Outstanding Bookmobile Librarian Award will be presented at the Awards Ceremony to be held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, during the 2021 Virtual Conference of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. The ceremony starts at 10:15 a.m. CST.