

# Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

1190 Meramec Station Road  
Ballwin, MO 63021



Press Release – For Immediate Release

**Eletha Davis, Mobile Library Services Manager at the Williamsburg Regional (VA) Library and the 2014 ABOS President, is one of the three recipients of the 2020 ABOS John Philip Excellence in Outreach Award. The John Philip Excellence in Outreach Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services and Farber Specialty Vehicles, is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions and prominent leadership by an individual in Bookmobile and Outreach Services.**

Eletha Davis began her career with Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) in 1984. Eletha has skillfully adapted her outreach services through the years to provide the best service possible to the community, providing service to adult care facilities, correctional institutions, preschools, schools, neighborhoods, and the community at large. Eletha has worked tirelessly for the community and has been a fantastic ambassador for her library for over 36 years.

Eletha is a respected and valued member of the leadership team at her library, and well regarded in the community. She has served on local organization boards, and been the recipient of local awards that reflect her commitment to serving her community, including the Williamsburg James City County (WJCC) Community Action Agency Community Star, WJCC Best Program Design Award for the Mothers and Friends literacy program, the James City County (JCC) Excellence in Collaboration Award, the JCC Neighborhood Connections Youth Leadership Award, the Youth Aeronautics Educational Foundation Outstanding Community Service Award, and the Verizon Local Hero Award, among other awards. Eletha has received accolades for her work at the state level, including the Virginia Public Library Directors Association Outstanding Program for Seniors Award for Intergenerational programming. At the national level, Eletha was the first African-American to be elected to the Board of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services, as well as the first African-American ABOS President (2014). Eletha was instrumental in the development and launching of the Bookmobile and Outreach Information Repository Project (BOIR), writing the charter and selecting the chairperson. The BOIR project is one of the largest and most important projects tackled by ABOS to date. The project was developed with cooperation from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the American Library Association, all US State Libraries and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies.

Eletha has made a powerful, lasting impact on her community. She provides relevant professional development with continuing education credit for the preschool staff, by planning and coordinating the annual WRL Preschool Training Day, now in its 14th year. Eletha also

responds to needs of the children in her community. Seeing a need for the younger children at her bookmobile stops to hear books being read, and a need for the older children to practice reading aloud, Eletha created a successful Book Buddies program. Both the readers and the listeners benefited from this program. Eletha continuously endeavors to bring library experiences to children who do not have the opportunity to visit the library buildings. One example of this is her FunFest Saturdays programs at the Abram Frink Jr. Community Center, located in a historically disadvantaged area. This monthly program provides STEAM activities for families, including animal shows, science shows, and activities like making and launching compressed air rockets. Eletha canvasses the adjacent neighborhoods prior to the events, encouraging the families to participate.

Eletha's commitment to providing access to information, books, and technology to people of all ages has always been important, but perhaps never more important than during this pandemic. When the schools and libraries closed on March 13, Eletha nimbly shifted her service model to meet the needs of the community. Realizing that access to the internet was paramount to the children and families education and lives, Eletha developed and launched the mobile Wi-Fi hotspot program. She turned the bookmobile vehicles into mobile Wi-Fi stations, and blanketed the community with access to the internet. She used her knowledge of the community and outreach to develop a schedule, taking the vehicles into the community six days a week to areas of the greatest need, including food distribution sites, dollar store parking lots, and local mobile home communities. The Wi-Fi hotspot program has received national attention, featured in American Libraries Magazine, "Advancing Digital Equity," July 2020, as well as Library Journal, "Tech Lending and Truly Mobile Hotspots Extend Library's Internet Access," May 21, 2020.

Eletha is a mentor to the people she serves in the community. Eletha is a strong believer in youth leadership development through service-learning. She inspires the youth that she sees in the neighborhoods to seek to improve their communities through service projects that benefit their neighborhoods. She offers the young people ownership of the project by allowing them to identify needs and pathways for service, providing them with gentle guidance and the resources they need to be successful. In this way, she provides opportunities for leadership development to youth who may not have the opportunity to experience leadership training in other ways. Eletha says one of the most gratifying aspects of her outreach career is when she can help a young person achieve their goals.

Eletha is a mentor to the library staff, not only staff members that she directly supervises, but also to the building-based library staff. Eletha encourages her staff members to pursue education and achieve their professional goals. Two of her staff members have pursued advanced degrees in librarianship. She provides building-based staff with opportunities to participate in outreach service. She welcomes ride-along helpers to assist with crafts, programming, and circulation. For many library workers, their time with Eletha on the bookmobile is their first foray into library service in neighborhoods.

**The John Philip Excellence in Outreach Award will be presented at the Awards Ceremony to be held on Wednesday, October 14, during the 2020 Virtual Conference of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. The ceremony starts at 9:30 a.m. CST.**