

Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

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Press Release – For Immediate Release

Wendy Pender, Older Adult Services Specialist at the King County (WA) Library System, is the recipient of the 2021 ABOS Senior Services Super Star Award. The Senior Services Super Star Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services and MEternally Reminiscence Therapy, is presented annually to a library, department, or an individual who has provided exemplary library outreach services to seniors in their community, including homebound seniors and seniors residing in facilities.

Wendy Pender exemplifies a “Senior Services Super Star,” according to her nominator Bruce Greeley of the King County Library System (KCLS). Wendy has tirelessly advocated for seniors with great enthusiasm and effervescence at the KCLS in her role as the system’s sole Older Adult Specialist, even obtaining her Gerontology degree.

Wendy develops wildly creative and enriching opportunities for seniors. In recent years, she created a mobile virtual reality experience for residents in facilities and senior centers. She ran a highly successful Arts and Tech Fest that brought together film, music, VR/AR, 3-D printing, and other creative pursuits designed with seniors in mind. She has created a host of fun and informative dementia-friendly programs. At the same time, she never loses focus on meeting the information needs of seniors, maintaining a core of programs on important topics such as estate planning and understanding Medicare.

During COVID, Wendy has adapted her services to keep the needs of seniors in the forefront at the KCLS. For example, Wendy is the creator of the nationally known Wisdom Café model, which helps seniors connect and combat social isolation through facilitated discussions on relevant topics. When in-person meetings became impossible, Wendy worked with colleagues to quickly transition to a virtual model so the program could continue supporting people now living in even greater isolation. Recognizing that some seniors would not be able to access an online program, she worked diligently to ensure that the programs would also be accessible and successful by phone. Simultaneously, she worked with a low-income senior housing authority to loan hotspots and laptops to residents.

Whether working with community partners to design an all-day Baby Boomer Boot Camp, contributing to community coalitions like Momentia Eastside, writing columns for senior-focused magazines, or launching an annual Activity Directors day to build relationships with and educate senior living facility staff, Wendy is always connecting with the community. This extends to her professional community as well; Wendy travels around the country (physically and virtually) to help other librarians and aging professionals learn how to improve their services to seniors.

Audrey Barbakoff, Community Engagement and Economic Development Manager at the King County Library System, shares that, “Wendy is a true super star of senior services. While she has pioneered many standout, award-worthy programs, even more telling is that she consistently provides a steady stream of meaningful, fun, and important services for seniors day after day, year after year. And with her inspiring mix of enthusiasm and deep knowledge, she helps everyone around her become more committed to combatting ageism and serving older adults.”

The Senior Services Super Star 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.