2024 TNLA Conference Awards

Intellectual Freedom Award: Rutherford County Library Alliance, for active promotion of Intellectual Freedom in Tennessee.

James E Ward Library Instruction Award: Ashley Shealy, for significant contributions to library instruction in Tennessee.

Frances Neal Cheney Award: Gabriella Cato, for significant contributions to the world of books and librarianship through the encouragement of the love of books and reading.

Honor Award: Miria Webb, for significant contribution to the furtherance of librarianship across the Great State of Tennessee.

Making a Difference Award: Cindy Wilkey, in recognition of outstanding contributions and continued support of programs and services that are instrumental in the growth of literacy awareness to the community.

Tennessee Library Association Trustee Award: Carolyn Allen, a library trustee who has made a significant contribution to library and information services in Tennessee.

Library Support Staff Award: Heather Oliphant, for outstanding performance by a Library Support Staff in Tennessee.

Daniel Taylor Award: Julie Randolph, for creative approaches to enhance library services for children and youth.

Presented by TNLA Children/Young Adults Services Roundtable and family of Daniel Taylor.

Tennessee Library Association and the Friends of Tennessee Libraries Friend of the Year Award 2023: Friends of the Lauderdale County Library, in recognition of and appreciation for outstanding accomplishments, dedication, and commitment to excellence in the advancement of library services and education in Tennessee.

Tennessee Library Association and the Friends of Tennessee Libraries Friend of the Year Award 2023: Gail Adkins, in recognition of and appreciation for outstanding accomplishments, dedication, and commitment to excellence in the advancement of library services and education in Tennessee.

2024 TNLA Conference Election Results

Vice President / President-Elect: Holly Hebert

Recording Secretary: Wiletta Grad

At Large Representative for Public Libraries: Miria Webb

At Large Representative for School Libraries: Jenny Winston

At Large Representative for Friends/Trustees/Retirees: Kathy Dooley-Smith

ALA Representative: Erika Long
I’m ending this presidency with so much gratitude for the opportunity I’ve had to serve all of you this past year. I hope that you have taken advantage of the emphasis on connections—person to person, library to library, and with all our members in the TNLA organization. Spending time focusing on your connections across all the people and organizations that make up your work circle creates opportunities to grow those bonds, because there is strength in numbers and tremendous support from those who understand best what you are experiencing as a professional.

Libraries and librarians continue to face an uphill battle against censorship, and the issue will not be resolved by one person. Only by using the strength of our numbers with our voices working together can we accomplish the goal of protecting all our readers’ rights to read what they choose.

In all your daily tasks and in working to ensure access to all the books and resources for your patrons, I wish you time for a summer of joy, rest, exciting summer reading programs, and all the fun you can possibly have. Take good care of yourselves and know you are appreciated so very much for all you do for others.

—Rhonda Tippitt
TNLA President

March for Libraries: A Celebration of Library Advocacy

On April 13, 2024, over 75 library professionals, patrons, and library stakeholders from across Tennessee (and one from Georgia) converged to celebrate intellectual freedom, librarianship, and freedom of speech at the inaugural March for Libraries event. Organized by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of the Tennessee Library Association, this event marked a significant moment in the advocacy for libraries and their vital role in society. The event featured compelling keynote addresses from Metro Nashville and Davidson County Councilman Sean Parker and from Kent Oliver, Senior Policy Fellow at the American Library Association’s Policy and Advocacy Office and former Director of the Nashville Public Library.

Councilman Sean Parker spoke passionately about the indispensable role libraries play in fostering a better society. He commended the library professionals present for their
dedication to preserving personal liberties and ensuring access to information. Parker emphasized that libraries are not merely repositories of books but are essential institutions that support the community, promote literacy, and provide a safe space for learning and growth. Kent Oliver’s address echoed these sentiments, focusing on the resources available through the Unite Against Banned Books campaign. He discussed how libraries have a unique opportunity to offer voter education services, thereby empowering citizens to make informed decisions. Oliver highlighted the ongoing challenges libraries face with censorship and the banning of books, urging the audience to continue their advocacy for intellectual freedom and resist efforts to restrict access to information.

Members of the Tennessee Association of School Libraries and the Southeastern Library Association were also in attendance, demonstrating a united front in support of libraries. As attendees made signage at the “Design Your Sign Station” sponsored by the TNL A and listened to the Banned Books Read Aloud, Diversity Storytime, or live music provided by Alex Sharp and the Wrath, everyone lined up at 10:45 AM for the parade aspect of the event. The parade was covered by the Nashville Scene and was featured alongside other library events as a part of the cover story for the mid-April edition of the paper. After returning from the parade, attendees participated in a drawing for autographed editions of recently challenged or banned books donated by Parnassus Books. Other freebies were donated for attendees by Imagination Library, Friends of Tennessee Libraries, Unite Against Banned Books, SELA, TNLA, TASL, and the Merrit Fund.

The March for Libraries event was not just a celebration but also a call to action. It served as a reminder of the critical role libraries play in upholding democracy, promoting diversity, and fostering an informed citizenry. The success of this inaugural event sets a promising precedent for future gatherings, as librarians across Tennessee and beyond continue to champion the cause of intellectual freedom and the vital importance of libraries in our society. We are also excited at the prospect of planning the 2025 March for Libraries event alongside TASL, as their executive committee voted in favor of co-hosting the event alongside TNL A next year!