

Mead's Alison Loewen Named Wisconsin Librarian of the Year

SHEBOYGAN — Alison Loewen, a youth services librarian at Sheboygan's Mead Public Library, has been named the state's Librarian of the Year by the Wisconsin Library Association.

Loewen, who joined Mead Library in 2017, was chosen for her work as an innovative and collaborative leader whose joyful approach to early literacy has transformed how families and communities engage with learning.

"Alison's work reflects the best of Wisconsin librarianship: innovative, inclusive and rooted in collaboration," WLA officials said. "Her joyful energy, generosity of spirit and unwavering dedication to children and families have made a lasting impact on Sheboygan and across the state."

WLA officials highlighted Loewen's research-based practice and authentic community listening, along with her leadership in early literacy programming, from statewide training to local engagement that's matched only by her deep care for the families she serves.

This past year, Loewen launched the Ready, Set, 4K initiative—funded by a Kohler Foundation grant—where she distributed over 500 school readiness backpacks, each thoughtfully designed to build caregiver confidence and close opportunity gaps for young learners.

She also helped launch a Born Learning Trail with United Way, created a Farmers Market Booklet to inspire literacy-rich family adventures and was part of the team recognized with the Sheboygan County Chamber of Commerce Working Together Award in 2023 for their commitment to youth wellness and community partnerships.

"We are extremely proud of the work Alison has done at the library and the valuable contributions she continues to make in our community that extend beyond the library's walls," said Mead Public Library Director Garrett Erickson.

Loewen currently serves as a WLA Youth Services Section Board Chair, a national PBS KIDS Early Learning Champion and a trusted thought partner in state and national library networks.

She also co-leads PBS Wisconsin Education's statewide library cohort, training more than 115 librarians to integrate playful learning strategies into their programs, reaching nearly 3,000 families statewide.

Colleagues and partners praise her unique ability to bring people together around a shared vision.

Kathryn McKillip, principal of Sheboygan's Early Learning Center, credits Alison with helping launch a new Maker's Space, designing collaborative family learning events like Work It Out Wombats, and leading meaningful field trips for 4K students that made many children's first library visit "welcoming, educational, and memorable."