



Main Library

P.O. Box 970
Jamestown, KY 42629
(270) 343-READ
(270) 343-2019 (fax)

Branch Library

P.O. Box 244
Russell Springs, KY 42642
(270) 866-READ
(270) 866-5201 (fax)

RussellCountyLibrary.com

March 15, 2016

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

I dare to say that all public libraries in Kentucky have excellent Children's Librarians who go above and beyond their call of duty, are energetic and enthusiastic, and are loved and even revered by children, parents, and community members alike. Fillamay Cowell, affectionately called Ms. Fill by everyone in Russell County, certainly fits this bill. As Children's Librarian at the Russell County Public Library for more than 20 years, Ms. Fill, like so many others, is a constant and positive presence in the lives of Russell County children and in the community at large, passionately promoting literacy both inside and outside the Library, and encouraging readers of all skill levels and ages to dream big.

However, in serving a rather small, rural community on a limited budget with two separate library locations in the county and being the only Children's Librarian on staff, Ms. Fill has not been able to make innovations in children's services on a highly technical level. Instead, she's what you might call "old school." Because she has worked for so many years to stretch every dollar with even the most meager of supplies, Ms. Fill has relied upon and instilled in her programs the importance and true value of using one's imagination. In this age of 3-D printers, eBooks, maker spaces, and instant mobile communication, I encourage this committee to consider those Children's Librarians, like Ms. Fill, who emphasize imagination as the greatest innovation of all.

Ms. Fill directs all children's programs and services at both our Main Library in Jamestown and our Branch Library in Russell Springs, as well as holding regularly scheduled reading appointments at three local elementary schools and most daycare centers in our immediate vicinity. In total, Ms. Fill holds more than ten programs every week, seeing more than 700 children each month both inside and outside the Library. On a yearly basis, she conducts nearly 600 programs (more than 12,000 during the length of her career), seeing nearly 10,000 children and families annually. Due to her dedication and hard work, our library ranks fourteenth in the state in terms of children's programs provided.

Discover What Speaks to You

She is instrumental in our Library's six-year partnership with Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery to provide Family Nature Club, which instills in children the importance of spending time outdoors. She regularly solicits local businesses for sponsorships of children's program initiatives. She has worked with our local Learning Center to develop literacy programs for families in the county, and is involved on a regional level in promoting public awareness of the Library and its children's programs. Her story hours have been expanded to include not only Head Start, but a special Homeschool Association as well.

In serving children and their families, Ms. Fill freely shares her dramatic and artistic talents, provides engaging activities to help young people develop their own creativity, talents, and interests, and asks all participants to join her in exercising the imagination. Whether she is wearing antlers and jingle bell socks at Christmas, her large rabbit costume for Easter, her red and white stovepipe hat for Dr. Seuss' birthday, or her usual array of handmade colorful vests with children's themes on them, Ms. Fill fulfills a role that our community needs and respects, projecting a living image of the many places that reading can take you.

As this committee reviews what are sure to be multitudes of applicants for this esteemed honor, please consider Ms. Fillamoy Cowell, the sheer body of her work, and her extensive reach that now spans generations of Library users. The Russell County Public Library is fortunate to have her on our staff, but it is the children of the county that are the true and life-long beneficiaries of her enthusiasm, knowledge, and heart.

Sincerely,



Lindsey B. Westerfield
Director
Russell County Public Library