

Nomination for Krystal Dionne - 2024 Literacy Champion Award

“A great librarian must have a clear head, a strong hand and above all, a great heart.” - Melvil Dewey

I have had the pleasure of working with Krystal Dionne for the past 10+ years. Our work relationship began when I started working with the PEI Public Library Service (PLS) in 2013. Krystal was employed as a casual library assistant in Montague and a temporary Branch Technician opportunity came up at the Hunter River Memorial Library. I remember thinking – there is no way she is going to drive all the way from Eastern PEI to Hunter River– but she applied and aced the interview. I can still remember the three words that came to my mind after her interview: “dedicated, energetic and empathetic.” Fast forward ten years later, and those three adjectives still apply.

Krystal has worked with the PEI Public Library Service for around 15+ years. She started as a volunteer at the Montague Rotary Library where she assisted with children’s library programming. She then became a library casual, substituting for permanent library staff when they were off on leave. It was during this time that Krystal discovered that she had a talent and passion for library work – and she saw firsthand the importance of literacy and lifelong learning. She took it upon herself to enroll in Nova Scotia Community College and obtained a Library Technician’s Diploma. After earning this diploma, Krystal moved into a Branch Technician role at various locations such as Hunter River, but she eventually became the permanent Branch Technician at Montague Library.

It was while working in Montague that Krystal spearheaded what I like to call a “library renaissance” within the community. She established new outreach partnerships with various community groups, who previously were not regular library users. For example, she coordinated specific library visits with Inclusions East, she offered on-site storytimes to the majority of daycares and Early Learning Centres within the area, and she coordinated regular programming with the Montague Boys and Girls Club. Her commitment and infectious enthusiasm also impressed members of the Rotary Club of Montague and Eastern PEI. The Group allocated additional funding for the Eastern PEI libraries, which allowed the spaces to become more interactive, accessible and welcoming, while also offering high quality programming. During her tenure at Montague Library, circulation and programming statistics soared.

During 2020, Krystal was motivated to go back to school and she earned her Masters of Library and Information Science. After obtaining this degree, she moved into another position as the Adult Services Librarian at the new Charlottetown Library Learning Centre. Here, Krystal was able to apply the same passion she displayed at Montague to the Charlottetown community. Partnerships with a plethora of community organizations begun or were strengthened under her watch. Together, these groups and the Library were able to offer a greater quantity and quality of programming to the public.

Along with being the founder of our beloved Dewey Decimal System, Melvil Dewey provided some valuable insights in regards to the individuals who work within the literacy/lifelong learning sphere. Dewey believed that these individuals ought to possess three things – a clear head, a strong hand and a great heart.

Krystal is the epitome of this definition. She is rational, honest and possesses the increasingly rare gift of common sense. Her commitment to the public is strong and she is enthusiastically dedicated in offering the highest quality of service. However, Krystal's most important trait is her heart. She sincerely cares. To date, I have never seen a library employee receive so many commendations from colleagues and the public alike. Krystal is a Librarian that patrons dream of having and that fellow staff aspire to be. She proves that work within the literacy/lifelong learning sphere can change peoples' lives.

I hope you will consider Krystal Dionne to be a worthy recipient for this year's Literacy Champion Award.

Sincerely,

Grace Dawson
Director of Libraries and Archives
Department of Education and Early Years