

LOCAL

CCPL Young Adult Team honored with 2020 Outstanding Employee Award

By JACOB TOOK

jtook@chespub.com

ELKTON — Citizens for Maryland Libraries, a statewide network of library representatives, volunteers and supporters, awarded the 2020 Outstanding Employee Award to the Young Adult Team at Cecil County Public Libraries (CCPL), recognizing their dedicated work and diverse programming before and amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team includes CCPL staff members Anita Delp, Elizabeth Drummond, Elizabeth Mayer, Alysia Van Looy and Ida Zago.

They worked together on programs including Teens Give Back, which connects volunteers with community service opportunities, teen advisory groups, which bring high schoolers and middle schoolers together for mentorship and evening events and, more recently, Activities To Go kits for students learning remotely



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRAZIER WALKER

The Cecil County Public Library Young Adult Team includes (clockwise from top left) Elizabeth Mayer, Anita Delp, Ida Zago, Alysia Van Looy and Elizabeth Drummond.

during the pandemic.

Katelyn McLimans, the CCPL Youth Services Coordinator, praised the team's hard work to pro-

vide resources for teens and young adults in Cecil County.

"The passion and dedication they have is inspiring.

Their enthusiasm is just — it radiates from every meeting that they have together," McLimans said. "They're constantly connected around new ideas. They're so dedicated to serving teens."

Before the pandemic, the Teens Give Back program targeted high schoolers who often walked over to the library after school, particularly in Elkton and Perryville. Through one project, the teens made toys, treats and beds for the rescues at Cecil County Animal Services. They also worked with organizations like the Mary Randall Center in Elkton and Perry Point VA Medical Center in Perryville for service projects.

The teen advisory groups, in addition to fostering friendship and mentorship between county youth, also led to unique events like teen nights, in which high schoolers ran activities for younger teens

after hours at the library.

For McLimans, giving teens the space to make their own programming allowed them to step into leadership roles and take on responsibility. She added that while teens are often left out of programming priorities, the YA Team keeps teens front and center.

"They've really been focusing on providing opportunities for teens that will give them ways to succeed in the future, building their leadership skills and connecting them with community members," she said. "For this group, teens are absolutely the focus and front of mind always."

Lynn Wheeler, the executive director of the Citizens for Maryland Libraries board, commended the work of the YA Team, and said they clearly deserved the recognition of the award.

"What I loved about them is that you can see they are

looking for opportunities to help their community succeed," Wheeler said. "I see tremendous efforts and energy to connect with teens in meaningful ways and give them opportunities to feel good about the work they can do."

She said that the attention to connecting teens with resources empowering their future success was especially important for developing the county's next generation of leaders.

"The library is a very important thread in the fabric of a successful community," she said. "Libraries meet people at whatever level they're coming in the door, and helping them to expand that into something successful can be enriching."

Representatives from Citizens for Maryland Libraries will deliver the award in-person, and the team will receive \$100 to acknowledge their work.

McLimans said that, despite having limited capacity for in-person celebration, seeing the team members highlighted virtually on the state-wide level felt special. She said they might host some internal celebration.

"How often is a team like this recognized on the statewide level for their dedication and the work that they do with teens?" she said. "Just having that moment in a statewide meeting, and that type of platform to be recognized — I think they all felt a lot of appreciation and pride for being recognized for the work that they do. It was very special."