



163 US Hwy 130 N, Bldg. 1, Suite 1C, Bordentown, NJ 08505 609-482-1282 <http://www.njla.org>

**To: NJLA Executive Board**  
**From: Juliet Machie, Executive Director**  
**Date: November 23, 2021**  
**Re: Executive Director's Report – October – November 2021**

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### **Advocacy**

Our first draft of NJLA's FY23 Legislative Priorities document was shared with the Public Policy Committee on November 5. The goal is to present the document to the Executive Board in December for approval. The FY23 legislative strategy is an elevated focus on Per Capita State Aid.

Given the shifts in the political landscape, following the November 2, 2021, elections, we are also framing strategy on how to equip our library directors to develop and grow power relationships within their communities.

We submitted a letter of support to the Fort Lee Public Library Executive Board. The letter affirmed the library staff's decision to host a drag queen program, amidst opposition from some community members. The letter (attached to this report) was shared at the library's November 22, 2021, Board meeting.

Over the reporting period, I had several conversations to inform additional strategies for improving the chances of receiving ARPA funds for NJ's libraries, from the State of New Jersey's ARPA funds appropriations. I will be sharing some strategies with our advocacy team and Public Policy, with the goal of executing additional outreach to lawmakers this December.

### **LEARNED (DAG) T. BULMAN GIFT**

NJLA received a check for \$300,000, on November 8<sup>th</sup>, from the Estate of Learned (Dag) T. Bulman. The payment represents a partial distribution of a 15% bequest to NJLA from Dag. There are no restrictions attached to the gift. The funds have been deposited to NJLA's TD Bank account. I have spoken several times with Dag's succeeding executor, Karen T. Fowler, and I apprised her that a formal acknowledgement from NJLA will be presented to her, following today's Board meeting.

I have prepared a draft letter of acknowledgement that I would like to send to Karen immediately following this meeting. I sent an email to NJLA's President, Treasurer and Finance Chair on November 8<sup>th</sup>, to inform about the receipt of the gift. I noted in the email that it would be appropriate to pass a resolution at this Board meeting, to acknowledge the gift. Also, I am recommending that we consider a named something, in honor of Dag Bulman. Congratulations NJLA! I would also like to acknowledge the work of Sue Rice and Pat Tumulty, in cultivating the gift.

## **NJLA AT NJLEAGUE 2021**

The New Jersey Library Association had a strong showing at the New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference, November 16-18, in Atlantic City. We made some new friends and renewed many old connections. Thank you to NJLA's Team NJLeague 2021 for representing us so well. We made a strong case for our Per Capita State Aid, and more importantly, we showcased New Jersey's Libraries as vital community resources and partners.

Our partners at Data Axle donated three Chromebooks that we raffled each day at the NJLM Conference. Congratulations to the following raffle winners:

- Day One: Lisa Bonanno – Union County Workforce Development Board
- Day Two: Mayor Andrew Wade, Waterford Township
- Day Three: Adam Modzelewski, Monroe Township

The NJLA NJLeague 2021 Team comprised: Juliet Machie, Kate Jagers, Linda Hoffman, Sarah Lester, Jen Brenner, Danielle Cesena, Dave Hanson, Steve Hrubes, Laverne Mann, Tierney Miller Jeanne Marie Ryan and Data Axle's Bill Loges.



*Pictured is the Chromebook Presentation to Mayor Andrew Wade by Juliet Machie and Bill Loges.*

## **Access Navigators Program**

NJLA issued a press release on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, announcing the selection of 12 Access Navigator libraries.

We hosted an all-day program at the NJLA Office on November 1<sup>st</sup>, to onboard two of our Access Navigators – Jeff Bolmeyer and Tani Mills. Dave Hanson, Eileen Palmer, Andrea Levandowski and Mimi Lee (NJSL), presented at the program. The new Navigators are continuing their orientation with our program coordinator, Gabrielle Clark. We have reposted the Navigator positions, as several of our Navigator libraries have indicated a preference for bilingual navigators.

NJLA hosted a Kickoff program for the Access Navigators Program on November 10, 2021, at the Monroe Township Library. Thanks to Monroe Township Library Director, Leah Wagner and her amazing staff, for hosting us. Our kickoff program was very successful, with nine of our 12 libraries in attendance. Thanks to our Access Services Task Force: Dave Hansen, Eileen Palmer, Luca Manna, Linda Hoffman and Andrea Levandowski, for coming out to Monroe Township to support our kickoff. Thanks to our President Kate Jagers, for also being there to support us. Kudos to our program coordinator, Gabie Clark, for a job well done.

## **Partnerships**

Update on the EDI Partnership – NJSL's Jen Nelson, LLNJ's Ralph Bingham and I are continuing to meet to plan for a cohesive Equity, Diversity & Inclusion framework for New Jersey's libraries. Our initial concept was introduced to the NJLA Executive Board on September 21<sup>st</sup>, and to the LLNJ Executive Board on September 16<sup>th</sup>. We have updated the EDI framework document, to include feedback from both Boards. In addition, we have articulated some action items. Our goal is to bring back the framework document with the action items to the two Boards for action in December. I have included the updated document as an fyi in the Board packet. Please kindly review and let me know if there are any items you want us to clarify, prior to the proposed Board action in December.

Joint Programs Committee – NJLA, LLNJ and NJSL are in the process of convening a program committee, with the goal of improving synergies among the three organizations. This effort is in response to the need to improve synergies among us, as expressed by many of our stakeholders. Our collective goals are to draw strengths from each other, communicate better to our mutual stakeholders and to minimize duplicated efforts.

Conversation on Intellectual Freedom – On December 2, 2021, at 10 a.m., NJLA will host a conversation on Intellectual Freedom, with representatives from most library organizations in New Jersey. The goal of the conversation is to convene the key players within the New Jersey library ecosystem, to collectively refine and improve our processes and communications about intellectual freedom. We are hopeful that the meeting will generate tangible proactive and response actions for addressing and preempting challenges. Thanks to my colleagues Ralph Bingham and Jen Nelson, for their willingness to collaborate on this and other issues that affect all of us.

NJASL Conference – I will be in attending the NJASL Annual Conference in Atlantic City on December 5-7. The NJLA Store will also be in attendance. Thank you to our partners at NJASL, for offering me complimentary registration to attend their conference.

## Attachment – Letter of Support – Fort Lee Public Library



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Dear President Soltano,

We are writing on behalf of the Executive Board and membership of the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA), to share our support for the staff at the Fort Lee Public Library. We commend you and your library staff, especially for the work that you do in service to your diverse community of residents. Public libraries serve all people, regardless of their race, color, gender identifications, religion or any other classifications.

You may be aware that your library recently held an all-ages virtual Drag Queen Story Hour on October 23, 2021. Leading up to the Drag Queen Story Hour, the library received communications from community members who celebrated that their library was hosting this program. The library also received communications from community members, who challenged the appropriateness of such a program. We want you to know that the New Jersey Library Association support and affirm the Fort Lee Public Library's decision to host the Drag Queen virtual story hour program.

New Jersey's public libraries are vital community centers dedicated to lifelong learning. According to the Trustee Manual for New Jersey Public Libraries, developed by the New Jersey State Library, it is the job of the Library Board to support growth of library services to the community. The success and achievements of public libraries depend upon the leadership, commitment and dedication of their Trustees.

Librarians and library staff uphold the policies and procedures set forth in good faith by the Library Board of Trustees. Through rigorous training, careful consideration, and understanding of all members of the community, librarians are equipped to make decisions about hosting a diverse array of programs that represent a balance of the spectrum of community interests and experiences.

We strongly affirm the Library Bill of Rights. Our library workers are trained to uphold the tenets of intellectual freedom. We are guided by our ethical responsibilities as providers of information and safe spaces for the communities we serve. We provide access to materials and programs for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people within the communities we serve.

We support the Fort Lee Public Library staff, administration and governance, in your efforts to serve all the people that are represented in your community. Thank you for upholding the core values of library service. Thank you also for standing against censorship in all forms. We urge you to continue to make the Fort Lee Public Library a safe space for all, regardless of their classifications or labels.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juliet Machie".

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Dr. Juliet Machie  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Library Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Jaggers".

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Kate Jaggers  
President  
New Jersey Library Association