

Copper Queen Library scores the top national medal for libraries, museums

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By Shar Porier



The Copper Queen Library received 2023's Best Small Library in America award by the Library Journal. Library Manager Jason Macoviak and program coordinator Alison Williams stand in front of the historic Bisbee library after winning the award in 2019.

BISBEE — Another national award has sent the Copper Queen Library staff into the stratosphere as it was awarded the Institute of Museum and Library Services 2024 National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

Library manager Jason Macoviak, library services coordinator Alison Williams and early literacy coordinator Gretchen Hill were surprised and pleased to receive the recognition of their innovative programs made popular by their patrons of all ages.

IMLS in an announcement stated, “The National Medal is the nation’s highest honor given to museums and libraries that demonstrate excellence in service to their communities. Over the past 30 years, the award has celebrated institutions that are making a difference for individuals, families, and communities.”

“This is the nation’s top honor, so I think we’re done,” joked Macoviak, who will never be used to receiving such awards. “It’s still sinking in. We want to take the time to celebrate this. We’re such a small staff and we get this great news, but we still have to clean bathrooms. We don’t ever take the time to celebrate the news and that’s what we really want to do. We’re thrilled. There is another small library as well, and it really proves the small libraries aren’t just surviving; they’re thriving.”

Considering all the programs the library offers beyond the shelves of books and DVDs, the staff has certainly earned it. Early childhood activities and summer reading programs help youngsters and students. The seed library allows patrons to swap seeds of plants that do well in the Bisbee climate. Opening the San Jose annex just a few years ago has boosted student learning in innovative ways. The Wi-Fi hotspots have been a blessing to many of all ages in the mile high town.

Williams was just as thrilled to be acknowledged "for the important role small and rural libraries play in the community. But, even more so, the role of our community in our success. We really want to thank our staff, our patrons, our partners and collaborators. It really is who we share this award with. We celebrate with our entire library community.”

Macoviak and Williams will be making the trip to Washington, D.C., to receive the award in the near future.

The Copper Queen Library was in the running for the top 10 along with a number libraries in far larger cities like the Washington, D.C., and Houston.

The Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum also was a recipient of the IMLS medal.

The Copper Queen Library was one of 30 national finalists recognized for “dynamic programming and services that exceed expected levels of service,” noted IMLS acting Director Cyndee Landrum. “Community outreach led to the programs patrons wanted which touched the lives of individuals and helped the community thrive. These institutions and their dedicated staff are stepping up to anticipate and meet the needs of their individual communities.”

The award will be presented at a ceremony this summer in Washington. For a complete list of 2024 finalists and to learn more about the National Medal winners, visit the IMLS website, www.ims.gov.

IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums to advance, support and empower America's museums, libraries and related organizations through grantmaking, research and policy development. IMLS envisions a nation where individuals and communities have access to museums and libraries to learn from and be inspired by the trusted information, ideas and stories they contain about our diverse natural and cultural heritage.