

## Announcements

### Individual of the Year: Former APLA President Wins Ability Advisory Committee Award

**Courtney Pyrke, APLA Communications Coordinator**

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Saint John Ability Advisory Committee (SJAAC) awarded Sarah Gladwell as “Individual of the Year”. Sarah is a Community Services Librarian at the Saint John Free Public Library (SJFPL) and served as the Atlantic Provinces Library Association’s (APLA) President in 2010/2011. Sarah received this award as part of the ceremonies to launch Disabilities Awareness Week in Saint John, NB. The award is given to the person who has made a significant contribution making Saint John more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities. “Sarah has been instrumental in facilitating, managing, and supporting some accessible programs at the library; all making our community a better place to live!” – Saint John Ability Advisory Committee.

Over the past 16 years, Sarah has fostered rich partnerships with organizations (locally and nationally) that focus on services for people with disabilities. These partnerships include the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Key Industries, SJAAC, the University of New Brunswick’s Student Accessibility Services, and more. Sarah has run accessible programs at SJFPL such as her monthly CNIB Coffee & Chat, Descriptive Movie Viewings, Knit-In at the Library, and more. Furthermore, Sarah runs a monthly “Wednesday Book Club” program, where she always ensures that the book selections have accessible formats for patrons with disabilities. This includes audiobooks, playaways, large print, and/or DAISY readers.

Aside from programming, Sarah always goes above and beyond to ensure that the library is a safe and welcoming place for SJFPL patrons who experience any sort of disability. Sarah is the go-to librarian for doing one-on-one tutorials or workshops for patrons who experience disabilities, particularly for patrons who are visually impaired. Sarah also runs public workshops on the 3D printer where she teaches patrons how to print adaptive tools such as a buttonhook & zipper pull, joystick tool for a computer keyboard, accessible bottle opener, and a key grip for locks. This past April, Sarah hosted a CNIB Pop-Up Library, which featured all of the service specialists within the Vision Loss Rehabilitation branch of the organization, as well as staff from CNIB Foundation New Brunswick. Some of the specialists included low-vision specialists, assistive technology specialists, and independent living specialists. Each specialist provided information and examples of items that they use during home visits to assess clients. Examples of the items included white canes and tips, liquid level indicators, CCTV’s, and electronic magnifiers. The pop-up library also had a booth with goggles where abled-bodied patrons could experience a variety of vision impairments when the goggles were worn.

Patty O'Donnell, a SJFPL patron who experiences blindness, stated that Sarah has been a vital resource to her for over 12 years. "Anytime I've needed anything, Sarah has always been there. Every time I come to the library and I am down, Sarah always gets me into a better mood." – O'Donnell. When Patty comes to the library, Sarah helps her write stories (for publication), check her emails, send family members cards, photocopy, get around and use the library, and even apply for a phone through CNIB. Patty stated that Sarah is a sweetheart and always looks forward to her visits at the library.

Sarah is truly leading the way in library accessibility services across the globe. She is the perfect example of how libraries can be offering more innovative and inclusive programming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As an early-career librarian, I personally aspire to become as passionate and dedicated towards offering all aspects of accessibility in my programming. Congratulations, Sarah!