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Orange County Library System wins Library of the Year Award

Award is one of four honors granted to OCLS by Florida Library Association

ORLANDO, Florida, May 20, 2021 – Orange County Library System (OCLS) has been named the 2021 Library of the Year by the Florida Library Association, a statewide organization that promotes excellence in Florida libraries. The honor recognizes OCLS and its staff for maintaining outstanding library services during the pandemic by quickly converting hundreds of programs to a virtual format and finding a path to safely reopen facilities with care, so customers had access to vital library resources during a critical time.

“I am so proud of the way our staff rallied to keep our libraries in operation during one of the most challenging times we’ve ever experienced,” says Library Director/CEO Mary Anne Hodel. “This award is wonderful recognition of their hard work.”

The award is one of four that the Florida Library Association will present to OCLS at the annual Florida Library Association conference in Daytona on May 20. The list of awards OCLS has received, and the organization’s comments about the library’s achievements, is below:

Lifetime Achievement

Mary Anne Hodel

Mary Anne Hodel’s vision for Orange County Library System has been based upon service and inspiration. In the nearly 20 years she has been at the helm of this system, she has introduced massive advances in technology, made investments in programs that support the community, and steered the library through a global pandemic. Her work has raised the bar for modern libraries and drawn national attention to the value they bring to those they serve.

Library of the Year

Orange County Library System

Although the pandemic forced them to change the way they do business, Orange County Library System did not allow it to stop them from serving the community. As soon as they were forced to close their doors to comply with the statewide stay-at-home order, staff worked from home converting hundreds of in-person classes, events and programs to a virtual format. They also started making plans for how they could safely reopen their facilities for essential services when the time was right. By June 1, all of their locations reopened with care for limited in-person service, even while many libraries around the nation remained closed.

Maria Chavez Hernandez “Libraries Change Peoples’ Lives”

OCLS’ ESOL programs

Orange County Library System (OCLS) has done a phenomenal job creating opportunities for English Learners and underserved populations by providing resources and funding as well as allowing creative ways to serve the needs of the ESL population. OCLS has the community's best interest at heart and is willing to go above and beyond to serve. OCLS has made the needs of English Learners and underserved communities a top priority and has included them in their Annual Strategic Plan year after year to ensure that they, as an organization, serve them well.

Betty Davis Miller Youth Services – Children

OCLS’ Virtual Field Trips

In the year 2020-2021, Orange County Library System (OCLS) revolutionized library programming for schools by creating free virtual field trips for students. This program invited 1,350 kindergarten and first-grade teachers in Orange County to participate. Student participation increased by 380% with a projected audience of 3,217 students. Field trip bookings increased by 220% and the participation of Title I schools grew by 200%. Virtual programming expands accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusivity for students, staff, and schools. The promotion of reading, literacy, and library use are demonstrated in every field trip through a story time, song, mini-lesson, and craft. This program can be easily replicated with two staff members and cost-effective supplies in any library.

Florida Library Association will present these awards at its 2021 Annual Conference in Daytona on May 20. The two-day event will feature the awards ceremony, speakers and presentations from libraries across the state, including OCLS. For more information, visit flalib.org.

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About Orange County Library System *Orange County Library System is a public library system that operates 15 locations in Orange County, Florida. Its mission is to create a learning environment that fosters personal growth and development so that customers have opportunities to learn, explore and become the best that they can be. For more information about the Orange County Library system, visit ocls.info. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)*