

# Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

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Press Release – For Immediate Release

**Cathy Zimmerman, Bookmobile Associate at Scott County (IA) Library and the 2020 ABOS President, is one of the three recipients of the 2020 ABOS John Philip Excellence in Outreach Award. The John Philip Excellence in Outreach Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services and Farber Specialty Vehicles, is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions and prominent leadership by an individual in Bookmobile and Outreach Services.**

Cathy has been with the Scott County Library for 14 years as the Bookmobile Librarian. From the very beginning, it was clear that Cathy had found her niche. She immediately began restructuring the current bookmobile routes into a more streamlined and efficient means of reaching and serving the public. The usage of the bookmobile grew over 25%. Seeing a need in the local school system for a better selection of reading materials and to supplement the classroom instructional needs, she rallied the school media specialists and began regularly scheduled visits to all five local grade schools and the Junior High. The bookmobile currently sees over 1200 students per month. She encouraged the classroom teachers to create lists of materials that they would need and brought those items in for their classrooms via the bookmobile. To date, this school service has increased to 7 elementary schools, local Junior High and 2 Daycare/Early Learning facilities. The bookmobile is also included in all “Literacy Night” events at the schools and many other special events. Cathy volunteers at the schools for any of the special “story times” or “read with a community member” events. In conjunction with the Children’s department, the bookmobile is now used during the summer months for “Story Time in the Park”. Several years ago, Cathy offered up the bookmobile as a Summer Reading prize – a private bookmobile party for a winner and a select group of friends at their home. Games, prizes, and treats rounded out the event. This became so popular; it is now offered as a prize for each of the library’s 6 branches.

Public awareness of the bookmobile program is high on Cathy’s priority list. Five years ago, she upgraded her license to a modified CDL so that the bookmobile could be used even when the driver was not available. To that end, she can be found in any number of summer parades, town holiday events and even at the County campground distributing books to campers. She has been featured on many local TV station shows, local public talk radio and has been featured in numerous newspaper articles across the state of Iowa.

Senior programming is a specialty with Cathy. She uses numerous methods to bring the outside world to the seniors in the Independent, Assisted and Dementia care units. Armchair travel, specialty programs, book talks and games round out the activities brought to the senior facilities. Many of the seniors get personalized visits and reader advisory services. The majority of those in the living facilities rely on Cathy to “choose for them” when asking for reading materials. In one facility, she maintains an in house library with the books that are donated to the facility as well as refreshing from library discards as well. During the current quarantine situation, Cathy can be found roaming around the outside of the senior facilities doing “window chats” with the residents – checking on their wellbeing, offering help with a crossword puzzle, reassuring them that life will get back to normal. Her programs continue through virtual methods along with “chat” sessions to relieve some of the boredom for the residents and give the Activity Directors a bit of a brake. Cathy “stepped up” her virtual connections by designing specialized games for the senior facilities. Friendly Feud, Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune are among the favorites with the seniors during the weekly Zoom chats. Each game is specifically designed for the facility. She visits the Memory care units once a week to maintain her connection with the residents. Programs include memory games, reading, travel logs and trivia.

Since Cathy’s first ABOS conference in 2015, she has jumped in with both feet and hit the ground running. Her passion and support for this organization has been unwavering. She has served on committees, shown interest by running for the board, is interactive with other’s seeking advice on the ABOS listserv, makes it a priority to network with fellow outreach peers at the conferences, goes out of her way to seek new attendees to make them feel welcome, shows strong support for our vendors, displays herself in a professional manor to other organizations and the list goes on.

As the 2020 ABOS President, the COVID-19 situation this year has brought on many challenges, but Cathy has managed to keep the organization together and moving forward, both encouraging the ABOS Board that serves alongside her to encouraging and leading the membership and all those involved in library outreach. Cathy was able to switch from a 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in Dallas to a virtual conference, which is expected to have attendance of over 1,000 individuals. Her goals of growing the membership by 15% was reached. Cathy shows true leadership skills in knowing that this hard work and accomplishments are achieved by a team effort.

Cathy has presented programs at ALA Annual in 2018 (New Orleans) and 2019 (Washington, DC). Those topics included ABOS, senior programming, bookmobiles and the ABOS Bookmobile and Outreach Information Repository (BOIR) project. In each of these presentations she demonstrates her knowledge and leadership skills locally as well as nationally. Cathy also served as the Bookmobile Wrangler for several years at conferences.

**The John Philip Excellence in Outreach Award will be presented at the Awards Ceremony to be held on Wednesday, October 14, during the 2020 Virtual Conference of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. The ceremony starts at 9:30 a.m. CST.**