

Jan Colbert by Melody Pittman

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If you have visited the Germantown Community Library, you have at some point in time, encountered Jan Colbert. She considers it her personal responsibility to greet folks with a smile while asking, "How can I help you?"

Jan most repeated phrase in the library is "Books to the people" and she does her best to make these words a reality every day. If she cannot locate the materials that a customer requests, she works her magic to put another book, a website, a database-- whatever into his/her hands that will be useful. Even though her primary responsibilities lie in the Children's/Young Adult areas of the library, she daily seeks to assist all library users from toddlers to grandparents. Because of her helpfulness, customers ask for her by name, generally adding that she was able to find the "perfect" books for a child or teen who usually hates to read and now the family has returned for more.

Jan is often the first to arrive at work and the last to leave, frequently scheduling herself to work Saturday and Sunday because she prefers to be busy working the desk over attending to her office-related supervisor duties. She is definitely a hands-on, up front person who customers gravitate toward because she greets them as soon as they walk in the door with an offer to assist.

One of Jan's special talents is to locate opportunities to schedule crowd pleasing events at the library. She follows up on interesting presenters, educational speakers, and entertainment-related personalities that she reads or hears about to determine if they might be a good fit for the library. It is through her tenacity that groups such as the Memphis Symphony, Teens in Theatre, Germantown High School's Spanish Honor's Society, and the Germantown Theatre now make it a point to contact us several times a year when they want a local venue to showcase their talents.

Jan is currently spearheading the Rotating Book Collection between the library and the Germantown Athletic Club. Each month she selects 50 picture books and 50 chapter books to be placed in the childcare rooms at GAC. In addition, she creates two teacher backpacks filled with story time ideas, themed books, puppets, and music so that childcare leaders can share reading fun with the children.

Story time for children is a favorite for Jan. Not only does she develop and implement weekly story times for Preschoolers, she creates a monthly story time for parents and infants, plays a leading role in Tree House stories for families, and performs regularly in Pajama Story Time and Tunes & Tales with the Memphis Symphony.

Mentoring staff is particularly important to Jan. She genuinely feels that it is her obligation to help her staff to get as much training and experience as possible, not only to better serve this community, but to prepare them for other opportunities out there in the world. She encourages staff to cross train in other departments and to visit other libraries to observe their programming. Through Jan's direction several staff attended the "Every Child Ready to Read" leaders' workshop, then arranged for these individuals (including her) to present four parent/child workshop sessions for families in Germantown.

Usually preferring to be a worker bee as opposed to leading out front, Jan plays both roles remarkably well. Fostering staff to work as a team is one of her strengths. Planning in the children's department is accomplished through a cooperative approach. Everyone has a voice. Everyone gets a vote. And, more than likely everyone participates either by leading or supporting from the sidelines.

Jan truly is one of the nicest people on the library staff. She has a way of making others feel like she can always be counted on, no matter what. And regardless of what is asked of her, from cleaning up disgusting goo that can escape out of a kid, to researching information for a teenager who has appeared at the library 5 minutes before closing, she will give it her all, without complaint. I believe that she represents the best of the best of all staff in the city of Germantown.

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SPIRIT Nomination for Stephanie "Slogan" Logan
By Michele Betty
April 13, 2012