

I Love My
Librarian!

Nomination for Julie Hatsell Wales

McNair Magnet School
Rockledge, Florida

NOMINATION

Shereen Luchten

- 1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?**

Have you ever met someone that makes you smile when they walk into a room? That person would be Julie Wales, our school librarian. Julie has a light that shines from within that can turn your day and that of any student around with a simple gesture or comment. Julie takes every day as an opportunity to help a teacher, student, parent or staff member solve a problem, explore something new or immerse herself in the pleasure of a good book. Julie is the most remarkable librarian because her goal is to touch the life of every individual that walks into her library in a positive way.

- 2. How has the nominee helped you and/or students at school? For example, did the nominee help you with a project, recommend resources or collaborate with you to enhance student learning?**

When asked how Julie has helped the students at school I had to seek the help of multiple teachers because she is constantly working with teachers in a collaborative manner to enhance the instruction for our students.

Vicki Karedes, social studies teacher, says that whenever she needs help she needs to only ask once and Julie is there to assist. Julie works with Vicki every two weeks to assist in teaching her students the use of technology and information literacy skills to enhance their social sciences. For example, the students learned how to use databases to research reliable sources versus using only the general internet search engines. She also taught them how to do effective more effective “Google” searching. Julie also taught the

students how to create presentations of information with such programs as Prezi, PhotoStory, and Glogster. Julie and Vicki collaborate throughout the entire year on integrating twenty first century tools for every student, preparing them for tomorrow.

Suzanne Demasis, language arts teacher, says that Julie has collaborated with her year after year to develop ideas for her research projects that incorporate 21st century skills. She has researched and recommended resources such as helpful teacher links school-wide as well as for her personally. She teaches lessons in the Research Process, using a research process model called FINDS, as well as lessons in plagiarism and Citing Sources.

Cliff Schmitt, Social Studies teacher, says, "Julie is the glue that holds this school together."

Mary DeRossett, new Language Arts teacher, says, "I wouldn't have made it through the year without her."

Tanya Mills, Social Studies teacher, says that Julie made her feel welcome and helped her to adjust to being at a new school. She assisted her with the technology and helped troubleshoot areas of frustration as she worked as a 'traveling' teacher. She also appreciated Julie's series of New Teacher Workshops.

Mary Gobert, Math, Science and Social Studies teacher, says, "If you have a problem or a need, ask Julie and she'll make it happen."

Sue Clarke, Social Studies teacher, says, "Julie has rescued me with technology issues on a regular basis. She also teaches all my students as we work our way through various research projects. She and I have collaborated regularly over the years to create projects designed to encourage critical thinking and arts integration, while discouraging plagiarism. "

Rob Kirkpatrick, Language Arts teacher, says, "Julie Wales does the work of five people. She is constantly working to teach the students of the school, make sure teachers are supported with resources, mentor her fellow media specialists, and...oh yes...she administers a welcoming and useful media center!"

Jan Fancher, curriculum coordinator, says, "Julie Wales serves as McNair's media specialist and is a highly valued educational leader in our school and district. She is also an exceptionally astute, well-read, gracious and loving woman who quietly, yet purposefully, has built a culture in our school that honors literacy and the dignity of each person. The media center has become the "hearth" of our school home. Mrs. Wales welcomes displays of student art and hands-on curriculum projects to be displayed in the media center, and rejoices in the talent and success of every student. Staff and students alike feel welcomed by the attractive, hospitable ambiance of the space she has created, and by the friendliness and warmth Mrs. Wales dependably exhibits. She is, always and everywhere, a teacher and an encourager."

As for me, a science teacher, Julie has been incredible in assisting me in the lessons that I teach. For example, when my students complete an airplane lab I simply give Julie a call and she will pull together all the books that she can find for me on airplanes that will assist my students in better understanding their structures, aerodynamics and design. Julie will also come into my classroom and assist my students with the use of technology whether it is simply problem solving technical issues or individual assistance in the development of technology skills.

Most every content area teacher, along with many of the elective teachers at our school have similar comments regarding our media specialist and, given the opportunity, could give their input as well.

3. How does the nominee make the school a better place? Please be specific.

Mrs. Wales values reading and believes it as the key to mastery in all other subjects. She knows that students who exit 8th grade reading at our above grade level have the best possible chance to cope with grade level texts in high school, succeed academically, and graduate. Mrs. Wales zealously tackled McNair's reading problems and outdated media collection. She wrote several grants in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$1.9M which brought vital resources into our school. She is a wise and careful manager of her budgets and acquired many print and non-print resources in all readability ranges for our extremely diverse student body. Upon Mrs. Wales' arrival at McNair in 2001, 65% of our 8th graders were scoring at level 1-2 on FCAT Reading (well below grade level). In the 2012 FCAT only 34% of our students scored at level 1-2 on FCAT Reading. After eleven years of weeding out and beefing up the media collection, working with administrators and teachers, mentoring students, educating parents, and promoting reading with a wide variety of activities, a significant reduction has been made in the percentage of 8th grade students reading well below grade level. During 2012 FCAT Reading, 54% of 8th graders scored at levels 1-2. This is still too high, but no one can discount Mrs. Wales' efforts have made a tremendous difference. In addition, our school grade increased from C to B to 9 consecutive A's since Mrs. Wales has been our media specialist.

If you were to walk into any classroom at McNair Magnet School and ask the students to take out a book to read, one hundred percent of the students would take out a book. The majority of those books would be stamped with Property of McNair Magnet Media Center, and this has all been made possible by Julie. Our school has created a culture that all students should be reading when they have "down time". This culture was created through the large selection of books that Julie has placed on the bookshelves of the library giving every student a book that they would enjoy reading developing a genuine love of reading. The reading levels of students at McNair range from that of a second grade level to college level. With such a large range of reading levels Julie was tasked with giving every student an opportunity to read books that they could comprehend and also enjoy. Our media center has the largest selection of fiction books of any middle school in the county and this has been made possible through Julie's continuous

fundraising, purchasing books at local sales from her own monies and seeking donations from outside sources.

Beyond providing the students with books that they would enjoy, Julie has created an inviting atmosphere in the library. Julie is a very positive person. She possesses strong values and uses those values to continually build up our community here at McNair. In the morning before school and during lunch the library is crowded with students checking out books, working on the computers, completing school work, or reading. All students, staff members and parents immediately feel welcomed in the library and know that no matter what their question or problem is, Julie will be there to assist without judgment. Everyone feels “safe” in the library to be themselves and continue to come back to seek Julie and the advice that she gives.

Mrs. Wales knows quality juvenile literature and readily recommends books to individual students at their appropriate reading level. She has also purchased and packaged many class sets of novels which tie into various areas of the middle school curriculum. In addition to infusing literature within subject areas, Mrs. Wales empowers teachers to incorporate technology and student technology products as well. Just as students are at various levels of expertise and readiness for technology, she recognizes teachers are also. In her positive and diplomatic way, Mrs. Wales is helping our older, technophobic teachers to dip a toe into the waters. She illustrates one new thing at faculty meeting weekly, in a “technology minute” in a simple, clear, step-by-step way, and she highlights why this is a good thing to know and use. She always offers help and support to anyone interested in adding that tool to their kit of effective teacher tools. Mrs. Wales is a National Board Certified Teacher, widely known in our district for her expertise in media and technology education, and her talent and enthusiasm as a presenter keep her in high demand for teacher training and mentoring in our district.

Julie was recently given the opportunity to take a job at the district level which would have been a promotion for her, but she decided that she could positively impact more lives by staying here at McNair.

4. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and the learning process?

McNair Magnet School began in 1990 as a magnet school for the gifted and accelerated while still serving the local population of students for seventh and eighth grades. Until 2005, the school’s population was seventy percent minority and thirty percent majority. In 2005 the school was awarded a million dollar grant that changed the school’s culture. Julie is one of two staff members that wrote the grant. The grant allowed for the addition of another magnet for the performing arts. All students were afforded the opportunity to have their core subjects taught through the application of the performing arts versus the prior magnet program that was for only a select group of students. Teachers were instructed in applying music, dance, drama and the visual arts into all subject matters. The students demonstrated a greater interest in learning and the results were shown on the state assessments in higher learning gains when compared to schools of similar student

populations. Today, the school's magnet has balanced the student population to fifty percent minority to fifty percent majority.

Eleven years ago, Julie began a reading motivation program called SHARP. This program encouraged even our lowest level readers to read independently and gave them the confidence to succeed. Our school has seen this program significantly impact our children's success in the area of reading achievement, as well as boosting their reading success in all areas of the core curriculum.

After reading research about the use of games with students suffering from developmental lag, Julie also spearheaded the use of such games (board games, card games, etc.) with one of our lowest 25% student groups before school. Specific games target various brain development which low-functioning students tend to be missing, affecting their academic success across the board. She and her collaborating teacher group are planning to continue this process this year.

After seeing that not all students were receiving common teaching in technology and information literacy (since their experience with these skills was dependent on which particular classroom or elective teachers they were assigned), Julie set up an information literacy and technology skills matrix to make sure that ALL students at our school received a common set of skills before moving onto high school. Initially she addressed this coverage through a team approach. However, as our teams were affected by our state's class size amendment, Julie switched the matrix coverage to departments. Now particular departments, such as mine in science, agree to either bring their students in to the media center for instruction in a particular skill, or agree to cover that skill in our classrooms. For example, this year our department has agreed to be sure that all our students have Google Docs accounts and know how to access them. The math department agreed to cover the creation of Graphs and Charts in Excel. Social Studies teachers bring their students in for Julie to teach Primary Sources and Online Databases, as well as document formatting. Finally, all Language Arts teachers bring their students to Julie (or she instructs their students in their classrooms) regarding Research Process, Plagiarism, Works Cited, responding to literature through Blogs, Wikis, etc., as well as for things like genre book talks. In addition she works with various teachers to help them design lessons for which students can create various technological presentations (as described above).

5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the school community?

Julie is a lead teacher at McNair and mentors all teachers in many areas, including technology integration in the classroom, as well as the use of technology to meet professional responsibilities. She serves as our district Mentoring Council Representative as well as one of our three Teacher Leaders. She was also selected as a trainer for our district's staff development initiative, BEST, and served on that team for the two years of the program. She trains and individually mentors teachers in the use of our online grading system and interactive teacher webpage software, which allow students to collaborate in discussion boards, submit work electronically, link to resources and email their teachers.

Additionally Julie helps teachers with, and promotes the use of, the e-Instruction CPS system to provide formative assessment and student involvement and feedback. Julie also inspires the staff in the use of effective teaching strategies that utilize best practices, such as those developed by Marzano, in developing lessons. When teachers implement these best practices their lessons are better structured to impact every student's academic achievement. She also created a teacher Wiki to facilitate communication among our staff beyond the email system.

Julie is the district trainer for the Follett Library Software program, along with serving as a trainer for the new media specialists' workshop every summer. She has served on multiple curricular development committees in the district, including Common Core, Sunshine State Blog, Brevard Media Specialists' Manual, Information and Technology Literacy tied to the Sunshine State Standards, as well as leading Professional Learning Communities and study groups such as Reading in the Content Areas, Book Club development, Web 2.0 Technologies, and Technologies to Assist the Lowest 25%. Julie is also a member of FAME (Florida Association for Media in Education) Staff Development Committee. In addition to the above, Julie is a National Board Certified Teacher as well as the recipient, two times running, of the state's Power Library School award.