
Working with boards, town government and community to promote DEI and social justice



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Values Espoused by Libraries

- Library profession's core values include a commitment to providing equitable service, creating a safe, welcoming environment for all library users, ensuring access for all, safeguarding privacy, and protecting intellectual freedom.
- SPL's strategic plan includes the service priority: "Celebrating Diversity; Spreading Cultural Awareness"
- Our annual action plans re-commit our resolve to diversify collections, offer multicultural programs, programs to address the interests of the LGBTQ+ community, and engage the whole community.

Catapulting Event in 2020



- The murder of George Floyd triggered a nation-wide response and the Shrewsbury community felt the sense of urgency to act
- First collaborative anti-racist program
- Wee the People (weethepeopleboston.org) program for children was sponsored and funded by the Counselling and Assessment Clinic of Worcester.
- Promoted on library's Facebook page, shared by CAC, other community social media platforms, reached a wider audience

Collaboration with Area Colleges



“Rights and Wrongs: Black Women’s History and the Suffrage Movement” talk by Dr. Kellie Carter Jackson of Wellesley College

“The Slavery Adverts 250 Project” talk by Prof. Carl Robert Keyes of Assumption University

“Importance of Inter-racial friendships” presentation by Cinzia Pica-Smith, of Assumption University

DEI Taskforce



- On August 11, 2020, The Board of Selectmen established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force comprised of an intentionally diverse cohort of Shrewsbury residents representing a cross section of the population.
- The Task Force met every month on Zoom and created multiple subcommittees:
 - Education subcommittee
 - Employment subcommittee
 - Healthcare subcommittee
 - Public safety subcommittee
 - Survey subcommittee
 - Storytellers subcommittee



Outcome of the Taskforce?

- Recommendation to have a permanent DEI committee responsible for:
 - ongoing tracking and collection of data
 - establishing benchmarks to measure progress
 - advocating equity efforts through budget priorities, policy and practice changes
 - supporting education and training for community members, elected officials and town leadership
- Select Board hired a consultant, VISIONS Inc. to review the report and guide them in prioritizing actions
- They voted to establish a standing DEIB committee in August 2022 and solicited community members who can serve on the committee
- They acknowledge the diversity in Shrewsbury, affirm their commitment to DEIB and promise to include DEIB objectives in their annual goals



Cascading Effect

- Networking led to DEI training for staff – 4 workshops in August 2021
- Connections that could be tapped when we were looking for cost sharing
Example, author Richard Rothstein, author of The Color of Law
- The event was sponsored by the Friends of the Shrewsbury Public Library, the Shrewsbury Rotary Club, A Better Shrewsbury, The Needham Diversity Initiative, the Needham Rotary Club, the Grafton Public Library, the Hopkinton Public Library, the Westborough Public Library, and the Southborough Public Library.
- Talk on CRT by a panel of experts led by local resident, educator, principal of Islamic school



Foundation-sponsored event

- In January 2021, we hosted a Zoom talk by anti-racist activist Dr. Ibram Kendi, sponsored by the SPL Foundation
- Coordinating with Penguin Random House agents was a lesson in patience!
- Promoted the talk among school teachers, administrators, residents via usual marketing channels
- Overwhelming response by the community with 500 registrations and more than 500 attending the Zoom talk
- Very successful program as indicated by comments in the chat feature during the talk
- Received donations to the Foundation immediately after the talk



Friends' Annual Board Meeting

- FOL usually invites a special speaker to their annual board meeting,. The Director researches various presenters and gives them info about 4 or 5 shortlisted performers.
- In October 2021 Kathryn Woods depicted Sojourner Truth in a special presentation titled "A Woman, Ain't I, A Depiction of Sojourner Truth."
- FOL sponsors monthly social justice programs

More BIPOC Programs – Local Indigenous Organizations

- Finding a contact for a local indigenous organization is very beneficial
- Informational and entertaining programs for all ages
- Potential help with Collection development and art displays
- Assistance with creating a land acknowledgement that the whole town can use





How to ensure continued success

- Keep boards and DH informed
- Monthly trustee meeting agenda has line items for Foundation and Friends
- Director's updates at FOL and Foundation Board meeting
- Share monthly event flyers with all board members
- Share quarterly print newsletter with department heads in the town hall



Networking within community

- Human Services Leadership Team – Library, COA, Parks & Rec, BOH, Veterans' services
- Member of Shrewsbury Town Center Association – provide library update
- Request school listservs and COA to share special event information
- Shrewsbury Historical Society
- Niche groups such as DEI taskforce members, Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services
- Facebook groups such as A Better Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury Diversity Coalition



LSTA grant – Civic Hub

- Series of programs centered around the theme “Radical Empathy”
- Kickoff with a community-wide reading of Eric Klinenberg’s *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*”
- Ryan Dowd’s presentations on:
 - Compassionately working with people with dementia
 - Ornery teenagers: how to effectively manage their problem behaviors
 - Homelessness shelter secrets
- Discussion with Robert Azzi about Islam
- SpeakOUT Boston volunteers shared their stories

Promotion of grant-funded programs



- Community-wide reading project is a great opportunity to partner with multiple local organizations
- Offering a selection of titles for school-aged kids based on the same theme
- For middle school readers: *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée
- For a younger audience: *Sofia Valdez, Future Prez* by Andrea Beaty

- Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services – Mental Health First Aid training for staff and town employees
- Community Conversations -Immigrants talking about their experiences. Worked with India Society of Worcester

*June Display:
Art by Bindu*







- **DEIB Committee**

- Select Board formed DEIB Committee after seeking applications from residents.
- 7-member Committee, appointed by the Board, has been meeting since January 2023.
- Library is partnering with them on the Land Acknowledgement project.

Land Acknowledgement Statement



- The Mass Library System has guidelines on how to develop a Land Acknowledgement Statement. We followed those guidelines and connected with Native American groups and sought their input too.
- Reference librarian created a statement to share with trustees
- Decided to work with town to develop a town-wide statement that can be approved by Select Board
- Working with DEIB Committee and with Nipmuc group

Takeaways – DEI in Action



Types of Programs

- **Community Based:** Wee the People
- **Partnerships Driven:** Local universities and other organizations
- **Flagship Events:** Big budget marquee programming and a source for fundraising

Content

- **Current Events:** Relevant issues that are top of mind from community members
- **Intentional focus on DEI:** Focus on anti racism,
- **Subject Matter Experts:** Invite experts on these topics/ issues whether from your local community or internationally renowned

Revenue Source & Fundraising

- **Grants:** Utilizing local, state or federal grants
- **Foundation and Friends Board:** Also a means of future fundraising
- **Community Raised:** Contributions of grassroots organizations

Marketing & Promotion

- **Traditional Marketing:** Social media and FB groups
- **Partner Driven:** Partnerships to raise more awareness and reach: universities, schools, community agencies etc.
- **Community Driven:** Word of mouth and respond to community demand