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## Executive Director's Report March 2021

### *Virtual Library Advocacy Visit*

Due to COVID-19, the annual Library Advocacy Day in Albany sponsored by New York Library Association (NYLA) went virtual. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, library advocates across the State met with their local State representatives with over 40 people in attendance. The meeting began with an overview of WLS system and member library services. Following the introduction, the meeting broke into two groups. NYS Legislators present included: Andrea Stewart-Cousins (35th Senate District); Jamaal Bailey (36th Senate District); Shelley Mayer (37th Senate District); Elijah Reichlin-Melnick (38th Senate District); Peter Harckham (40th Senate District); Nader Sayegh (90th Assembly District); Steven Otis (91st Assembly District); Thomas Abinanti (92nd Assembly District); Chris Burdick (93rd Assembly District); Kevin Byrne (94th Assembly District). Libraries shared specific stories (in some cases via video) of the creative solutions they found for providing their communities with what they needed to survive during COVID. A video recording of the event can be found on the [WLS website](#). In addition, [NYLA's Online Advocacy Center](#) has an easy way to email a message in support of library aid to legislators as well as postings to be shared on social media.

**NYS Budget FY2021-22:** On March 15<sup>th</sup>, both the Senate and Assembly passed their one-house budget resolutions. These revised budgets contain a proposed \$96.6 million (Assembly) and \$94.1 million (Senate) for Library Aid and \$34M (Assembly & Senate) for Public Library Construction Aid. In addition, Speaker Heastie and Science & Technology Committee Chair Steven Otis announced that the Assembly's Budget includes a new statewide \$15 million Digital Inclusion Grant Program to assist local efforts to bring digital equity to individuals left out of today's essential digital technology.

### *WLS Trustee Institute*

Over 65 people joined our virtual WLS Trustee Institute with Jerry Nichols on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Co-author of the NYS Trustee Handbook, Mr. Nichols shared his expertise regarding the *Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees* with real life examples on the following topics:

- Your Job as a Trustee and the obligations of the Duty of Care, Loyalty & Obedience
- The roles of the Director and the Trustees
- Basics of Library Law and Structure
- Best Practices for Effective Meetings

The video of Mr. Nichols' presentation, as well as a copy of the slides that he followed, are now available on the [WLS website](#).

### *Cataloging Services*

Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray and Harrison Public Library Director Galina Chernykh discussed an "#OwnVoices" special collection to be created by the library. According to a definition on the

Vermont Book Shop website, "'#OwnVoices' is a term coined by the writer Corinne Duyvis, and refers to an author from a marginalized or under-represented group writing about their own experiences or from their own perspective, rather than someone from an outside perspective writing as a character from an underrepresented group." Harrison Public Library will select the titles and the WLS catalogers will add "#OwnVoices" as a series heading to the bibliographic records in order to make the works findable for someone searching the catalog.

Cataloger Melissa Glazer has been continuing to catalog another special collection, New Rochelle Public Library's Israel Forum Collection. She also addresses the majority of emailed requests for cataloging from the member libraries. Cataloger Qingshe Ren cataloged DVDs, Blu-rays, videogames and audiobooks for libraries including Dobbs Ferry Public Library, Greenburgh Public Library, Irvington Public Library, Mount Kisco Public Library, Mount Vernon Public Library, New Rochelle Public Library, White Plains Public Library and Yonkers Public Library.

Mr. Wray has been working on some pandemic-era materials which required original cataloging:

Yonkers Public Library is planning to circulate reading lamps and book holders as a part of their "Library by Mail" program, which serves homebound Yonkers citizens. Mr. Wray discussed the plan with Alan Houston, the library's Reference Librarian/Coordinator of Services for Special Populations, and has begun cataloging the materials.

Greenburgh Public Library is circulating backpack kits for children; each backpack is focused on a different theme (interpersonal skills, geometry, vocabulary, etc.) and contains an assortment of books and educational toys reflecting that theme.

With the renewed interest in baking during the pandemic, Dobbs Ferry Public Library is circulating cake pans in the shape of fun characters (Big Bird, Raggedy Ann, Disney's Pocahontas, Hello Kitty, etc.).

Development

This first quarter has been a busy time for WLS Development Projects. After many months of cultivation and grant submissions, funding for our Digital Equity projects have increased to \$267,400. Westchester Community Foundation approved our grant request for \$158,500 to support a working collaboration with Westchester Head Starts and shelters to provide 253 families lacking adequate digital devices with Chromebooks and WiFi support where needed. The grant includes training for staff and patrons. Recipients will be able to keep their devices.

NY CARES - IMLS (Institute of Museums & Library Science) appropriated \$65,926 to WLS and approved our request to use the funds to partner with member libraries in providing 100 Chromebook loaners to individuals on public assistance, staff technology training and outreach marketing to targeted populations. Additionally, during the last week of 2020, RXR Realty contributed \$43,500 to WLS for a collaboration with The STEM Alliance and the Department of Social Services (DSS) that provides refurbished desktop computers to 60 families currently in DSS Temporary Housing. These devices were delivered to recipients during the first weeks of March. Each family received a temporary library card, information on library services, and an invitation to connect with their local library; they also will be able to keep these desktops for their personal use. For #GivingTuesday, nearly \$4,000 was raised from individual donations toward this initiative.

These grants help to broaden access to underserved residents, who remain either without a digital connection or without an adequate



Joe Maurantonio, WLS Manager of Special Projects, delivers RXR refurbished desktop to a grateful single mom of four.

device. An estimated 13.6% of Westchester residents do not have internet and approximately 1 out of 5 households did not have a desktop or a laptop before the pandemic.

Joe Maurantonio, Manager of Special Projects, and Dana Hysell-Alongi, Project Relations Specialist, will manage the purchasing of devices, device set up, delivery and staff technology training to assist new patrons with their devices, and work with libraries to connect with these mostly new patrons.

Director of Development Pat Brigham attended the virtual NYS Education Department Second Digital Equity Summit and facilitated one of its 11 breakout rooms. The Digital Equity Summit endeavors to establish a shared understanding of digital inequity and create a joint vision toward achieving digital equity in New York State for all New Yorkers. The summits bring together education, government, community, and business partners to recommend next steps (both short-term and long-term) at all levels—federal, state, local, and organizational. The summits include presentations by national speakers and breakout discussions. Invited participants take part in facilitated small group discussions, sharing their ideas, expertise and experiences. A final report will identify barriers to achieving digital equity and contain recommendations for action at federal, state, regional, local and organizational levels. A third summit will be held in June. The summits are live streamed. [Summit Dates | New York State Education Department \(nysed.gov\)](#)

Work continues to build relationships with our existing strategic funding partners and identify new funding partners.

### ***Public Innovation & Engagement (PIE)***

For the last five years, Westchester Library System has been recognized as a key sponsor for the work of the Senior Law Day Collaborative, a 20+ year project of the Westchester Public-Private Partnership for Aging Services.

The **Senior Law Day Collaborative** provides access to the knowledge and guidance of more than 150 professionals focused on elder law and related topics, i.e., the concerns of older adults, caregivers and people with disabilities. The Collaborative's attorneys, financial planners, geriatric care managers, and other specialists deliver free community presentations and brief one-to-one consultations at Collaborative events throughout the year.

During the pandemic, the collaborative quickly moved from delivering in-person programming, most frequently at libraries, to producing bi-weekly webinars. Fortunately, PIE was ready to help guide the group in using the Zoom platform. Our team has continued to help with program coordination and moderation. Close to 1,800 people attended the Collaborative's programs between March and December of 2020 (past programs can be viewed at <https://www.seniorlawday.info/2020-2021-webinars/>).

The webinar topics listed below give the best sense of the type of issues the Collaborative routinely addresses.

- Medicaid Home Care Services
- New Power Of Attorney Form In New York in 2021: What You Need To Know
- Asking The Right Questions: An Inclusive Approach To Estate Planning
- I Don't Want To Talk About It: The Most Frequently Overlooked Aspects Of End-of-life Planning
- How Do I Pay For Long-Term Care? Planning With And Without Long Term Care Insurance
- Should I Get A Will Or Trust? Who's Afraid of Probate?



- Legal & Health Concerns for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- Are you Looking to Sell your Home in the Midst of COVID-19?
- Housing Law And Eviction Prevention

PIE Director Elena Falcone has served as a program co-chair for the last five years. The Department's contribution to this program include:

- hosting the project's website - [seniorlawday.info](http://seniorlawday.info);
- assisting with content production (e.g., video editing of webinars, layout of the annually-published [Elder Law Q&A](#));
- providing reference and referral services through the website's ASK US feature; and
- developing and presenting programs related to topics such as [health literacy](#) and computer privacy.

The Collaborative actively solicits feedback from program participants. It is universally positive. A favorite comment that is consistent with WLS's goal of community empowerment: "I learned that something I thought might be complicated can easily be taken care of by myself." WLS benefits from its support of the Collaborative in a number of ways:

*Member Library Service:* Through the collaborative, member libraries have access to authoritative, non-commercial presenters that can address diverse topics of relevance to older adults. Currently, there are 26 programs from which member libraries can draw ([full roster posted here](#)). These are offered at no cost and can be delivered as one-time events or as part of a series or local "day" of learning (as was hosted twice by the Yonkers Public Library). Additionally, Collaborative members are invited to offer programming as part of professional development.

*Direct Service:* There is cross-over in questions that come to our Senior Benefits helpline. Our familiarity with the Collaborative's programming makes it easier to connect our clients/patrons with knowledgeable professionals.

*Library Awareness:* WLS has been an active participant in programming. Not only are events regularly moderated and launched, but the Collaborative's events are leveraged to share information about member library and system programs of relevance to older adults. Note that the sharing has also been vital among the Collaborative members—many were unaware of the fullness of what local libraries offer, as well as the opportunities for learning and service at the system-level.

*Relationship with Westchester County:* Our continued work in the Collaborative supports our ongoing relationship with the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services (DSPA), a group that also participates in Senior Law Day programming. As a result of that relationship, we were able to assist the public and staff in securing vaccine appointments through DSPA channels.

WLS's work in the Collaborative assures that essential content is available for member library patrons. Most importantly, it supports our position as a key resource for the County's older adults in conjunction with Westchester Seniors Out Speaking (WSOS), VisionLabs: Reading for a Lifetime, and Music and Memory at the Library. Information on these other programs can be found at [seniors.westchesterlibraries.org](http://seniors.westchesterlibraries.org).

Respectfully submitted,



Terry L. Kirchner  
Executive Director