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Julie Milavec Awarded as 2025 Illinois Library Association Librarian of the Year

Downers Grove, IL - July 23, 2025 - The Downers Grove Public Library is proud to announce Julie Milavec, Director of the Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL), as the recipient of the Illinois Library Association's Librarian of the Year award for 2025. This prestigious award celebrates Milavec's lifelong commitment to the profession, her many professional accomplishments, and her dedication to libraries and the communities they serve.

At DGPL, Milavec's work has impacted the building, programs and services, and finances of the library. She led the library through nearly 10 years of capital projects, including two partial renovations and a roof replacement, without having to take out bonds or make significant levy increases. Additionally, DGPL eliminated fines, established auto-renewals, increased card accessibility for teens and unhoused patrons, hired its first full-time Social Worker, and installed outside pickup lockers to improve access to the library and its resources. Milavec is deeply committed to the belief that libraries are for everyone. Under her leadership, DGPL engaged in staff wide equity training, examined policies and procedures for inequities, and brought in exhibitions and programs showcasing perspectives and histories of marginalized communities. The library has been recognized for its continued excellence in its awards, ranging from its recognition in 2022 as a 5-Star Library by Library Journal, to this year's ILA awards acknowledging additional staff. "We are incredibly proud of Julie for the recognition of the great work she has done on behalf of the Downers Grove community and all libraries across Illinois," shared Matt Topic, President of the Board of Library Trustees.

Julie Milavec, as both a daughter and a granddaughter of librarians, has been connected to libraries her entire life, including as a youth volunteer at the Joliet Public Library. She has worked as a librarian for over 30 years, 25 of those years spent in director roles, and worked at the Lemont Public Library District, Worth Public Library District, West Chicago Public Library District, and Plainfield Public Library District. She has served as the director of the Downers Grove Public Library since 2016.

In addition to her professional achievements, Milavec has spent a significant amount of time in her career volunteering, sharing her knowledge with the professional community, and developing the next generation of librarians. She has been an active member and served on numerous boards for professional organizations such as the Illinois Library Association, the

Reaching Across Illinois Library System, the System Wide Automatic Network, and the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee.

The Librarian of the Year Award celebrates individuals who exemplify outstanding leadership, innovation, and dedication to advancing library services. Julie Milavec's incredible achievements and lifelong commitment to the profession have strongly impacted DGPL and libraries across Illinois.

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About the Downers Grove Public Library

The Downers Grove Public Library welcomes all to discover, grow, play, and learn. DGPL serves a population of approximately 50,000. Community members can enjoy books, movies, music, programs for all ages, readers' advisory and reference support, online databases and materials, study rooms, community connection, and so much more at the library. Each year, DGPL circulates over 1 million items, hosts nearly 2,000 programs, and welcomes over 430,000 visitors. Learn more about DGPL at dglibrary.org.

About the Illinois Library Association

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization that represents Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. Founded in 1896, it is the third-largest state library association and serves as a chapter within the American Library Association. ILA is comprised of 2,000 personal and more than 500 institutional members, made up of public, academic, school, and special libraries, as well as librarians, library staff, trustees, students, and library vendors. For more information, visit ila.org.

Attached Images and Captions:

Julie Milavec, Director of the Downers Grove Public Library and ILA's 2025 Librarian of the Year.