

# The Laconia Daily Sun

THURSDAY

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023

VOL. 23 NO. 208

LACONIA, N.H.

527-9299

FREE

## Laconia High's Karen Abraham is named 'Librarian of the Year'

Honoree grateful to librarian network for advice, support

BY ADAM DRAPCHO  
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — The library is a unique space in a school. Karen Abraham saw how the library worked at a school where she served as secretary when her children were young, and when it came time for her to expand her professional horizons, she put herself into that library.

It wasn't an easy transition, though, especially when she was hired as the library media specialist at Laconia High School. She is involved with just about every educator in the building, but none of her co-workers had the experience to guide her into her new role. So, she leaned on the network provided by the New Hampshire School Library and Media Association, and last week the professional group honored her with the title of "Librarian of the Year" for the 2022-23 school year.

She said it was "humbling" to receive the award — particularly since she



Karen Abraham, library media specialist at Laconia High School, was named the New Hampshire School Library and Media Association's "Librarian of the Year" for 2022-23. (Adam Drapcho/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

received the NHSLMA's award for service in 2022 — but said that the greatest gift she's received from the organization is the connection to other library professionals.

"I love putting my time into work for NHSLMA and helping other people in this profession, but I get way more out of it than I put into it," Abraham said. "I have a group of librarians that I am texting every day. I couldn't do what I do if I didn't have these connections to these people."

Abraham made the transition from main office to library while working at Tuftonboro Central School, earning her certification from Plymouth State University in the process.

She said she was "inspired" to become a librarian while working as the secretary and seeing how the library functioned within the school. When she came to Laconia nine years ago, though, she said she felt as though she were "on an island," and needed guidance to understand how to do the job in a 9-12 grade setting. That's when she first started engaging with NHSLMA.

"It was my way to talk to other librarians. That's been my life-saver," Abraham said.

In time, Abraham realigned the library with modern times. That included removing old orange carpet to reveal hardwood underneath, replacing 60-year-old books with newer titles that speak to today's teenagers, and taking down the tall bookshelves in favor of shorter units that allow natural sunlight to flood the space.

Abraham's grandmother, Muriel Brown, was a librarian in the town of Bethlehem, she said.

"I've always had a connection to reading. Seeing that librarian bring a group of kids in, whether it's reading a book or teaching them computer skills, I saw it as a way to be a part of the school, and to teach them something that I also enjoy," Abraham said.

She's a lover of books and reading, naturally, but being a school librarian in 2023 is about much more than fiction and nonfiction. Abraham visits classrooms to give lessons about research when asked by a teacher. The library staff act as support for the

students who are taking classes virtually, as well as troubleshooters for students experiencing problems with district-issued laptops. And, yes, students do still come to the library looking for a good read.

"When students come in, the important thing, if they're looking for a book from me, is to hear what they're looking for and figure out the right fit for that kid," Abraham said, recalling how she once sent a student away with a graphic novel — something he had never read before — and he returned the next day asking for another one. "What's exciting is when you can connect them. Here, as a library, we have a collection that can speak to everybody."

Books alone didn't provide Abraham with the connection she was hoping for, so two years ago she started teaching a coding class. Then last year, she added a virtual robotics club that meets after school, and this year, she is an adviser for first-year students.

With the award, Abraham will get to attend the Department of Education's annual awards gala, but beyond that, she said she's looking forward to continuing to do her work, both in her library and with her professional peers.

"It makes me proud of what I've been doing, it also makes me want to do more of it. I want other people to feel how I feel when I'm working with my colleagues and making those connections," Abraham said. "Anyone in this position deserves to feel a connection to others in their field, and to have a little library family to reach out to."

Lisa Hinds, part of the administrative team at the high school and recently named principal for the 2023-24 year, said that Abraham's service to the school is multi-faceted.

"When she is not here, we know it," Hinds said.

Superintendent Steve Tucker said Abraham has made herself a valuable addition to the district.

"Karen is a life-long learner who regularly engages deeply in professional development. She is a leader of our district librarians and is involved in the state organization of school librarians," Tucker said. "Karen is an engaged member of our staff who has great relationships with her staff and students. I often see her at student events outside of school. Karen is always willing to help a person out."