

# ***Everyday Advocacy Matters***

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## **From the Editor**

### **Don't Try Harder. Try Different.**

Stop me if you've heard this one before:

You've got a lot on your library plate, and you're absolutely sure you can get everything done. Even though your spirit's willing and you want to do it all, you've taken to starting sentences like this:

- "If only there were a few more hours in the day..."
- "If only I had another staff member to help me out..."
- "If only there were a few more dollars in the library's budget..."
- "If only I tried just a little harder..."

While we've all wished for more time, more help, and more money, it's that last bullet that really gives me pause.

As children's library professionals, we're already the epitome of "trying just a little harder." Every day we get out there and bring the best we've got to improve outcomes for the kids and families we serve in our communities. The suggestion that we try harder just feels defeating, especially during large-scale programs and events like summer reading.

Several years ago when I was facing a personal struggle, a very wise friend told me, "Don't try harder. Try different." For me, that was a revelation, and it completely changed my attitude and approach to my situation.

If that resonates with you, too, why not take the same approach to Everyday Advocacy?

As summer winds down and the busy back-to-school season begins, I invite you to try different with your advocacy efforts. Take some time to rethink your strategies and approaches and see what changes you can make to find even greater success.

Challenge yourself to keep things fresh and interesting this fall with just a little different sprinkled on top of the regular. With a few ideas from this issue of Everyday Advocacy Matters, you'll be off to a great start!

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# Everyday Advocacy Spotlight

## Savvy Success Story: Advocacy Through Facebook Groups

### Alison King, Lower Merion (PA) Library System

I'd like to share an advocacy success story related to Facebook groups.

Through my story time families, I found out that there was a local Facebook group for parents in my library's service area where parents ask questions about any aspect of parenthood, including questions like, "What in the world can I do with the kids this weekend?" I joined the group and have been advertising our library's programs on it ever since.

This has brought in many new folks who have attended programs, signed up for library cards, and begun using my library as their primary borrowing location. I've also gleaned important insight about the best times to hold programs for different age groups, as well as some of the types of programs or services parents really want.

I believe the success is due to my consistent presence in the online community, eagerness to answer questions about library events and book recommendations, and the fact that I'm using my personal page to participate in the conversation, making me even more approachable and human (although that last part is necessary—you can't join a group as a Facebook business page).

Finally, I've networked with local businesses who have helped in various ways, from hosting free programs at the library to providing book and toy donations, just from being in this same Facebook group.

A few tips for those looking to try Facebook group outreach:

1. **Check first about the group's rules.** Some want you to submit events directly to them for approval rather than just posting everything yourself. There also may be geographical or demographic requirements. For example, the group I joined is called the Main Line Parent Community, but I checked with the organizers first to make sure it was OK to join since I'm not a parent and don't actually live within the Main Line area of Philadelphia.
2. **Try not to overdo it.** Community members generally appreciate it more if you answer a question of theirs with an offer for help from the library as opposed to a constant barrage of postings about the library. Also, remember that you are representing your organization, so be professional even though you're on your personal account!
3. **Look for other relevant groups to join, and repeat the steps above!** Search for groups that have your city/county/general area's name in the title or groups whose names include terms like community, moms, parents, babysitters, events, etc. Ask your patrons for suggestions of places that they post or read on Facebook, and find out how to join those groups.
4. **Use your elevator speech (or a very short version) any time you post or reply on a group.** Don't just expect people to remember who you are! You might try something like this:

"Hi, there! I'm the children's librarian at Penn Wynne Elementary, and we happen to be holding a special Harry Potter-themed event this Saturday from 10 a.m.-noon. Since you're looking for something fun to do with the whole family, I want to invite you (and anyone else reading this) to our Harry Potterpalooza for games, trivia, and prizes that the whole family will love. It's free and open to all ages, library patron or not. Please let me know if you have questions, and hope to see many of you there!"

5. **Try to include your @LibraryPage Facebook handle to link to the library's page directly within the context of your post or reply.** You may also include the library or system's website address to direct to further information. Try to be concise but also provide enough information that group members can easily figure out the who, what, when, where, and why of your post.

## **What Does Everyday Advocacy Mean to You?**

Still a little fuzzy on what Everyday Advocacy is all about? Looking for a way to explain the initiative to colleagues and families? Here's what it means to three ALSC members who've sent us their feedback by submitting the Get Your Advocacy Button! webform:

**Pam Carlton**, Missoula (MT) Public Library

"Everyday Advocacy is never assuming folks know what you do. As advocates for young children we need to make and take opportunities every day that promote what we do and how we help."

**Laura Mikowski**, Hillsboro (OR) Public Library

"Everyday Advocacy means doing little important things in the children's room so that children see themselves in our book and media collections. It means not missing the opportunity to introduce diversity when children and parents come up to ask for traditional subject-specific titles so all children are included in the choices we share."

**Tess Prendergast**, Inclusive Early Literacy

"Children's librarians are well-positioned in diverse communities to offer rich resources that support all families. It is important that the rest of the profession and the greater community recognize our expertise and the benefits that we can and do offer on a daily basis in our libraries. Everyday Advocacy therefore means that children's librarians must intentionally demonstrate our worth and the positive impacts we have on children and families in our communities."

## **From the ALSC Advocacy Committees**

Check out these recent ALSC blog posts for the latest from Priority Group I:

### **Early Childhood Programs and Services**

Brooke E. Newberry, Chairperson  
Changing Table Initiative Comes to Fruition

### **Intellectual Freedom**

Chelsea Schmitz Couillard-Smith, Co-Chairperson  
Laura M. Jenkins, Co-Chairperson  
Dealing with Challenges to Graphic Novels

### **Library Service to Special Population Children and Their Caregivers**

Lesley Mason, Chairperson  
The LSSPCC Toolkit: Making All Families Feel Welcome at the Library

### **Public Awareness**

Amy Koester, Chairperson  
Takeaways from Sessions at #alaac15

### **School-Age Programs and Services**

Amber Lea Creger, Chairperson  
On Display: Create a Space for Your Youngest Library Patrons

# News You Can Use

## Take the Everyday Advocacy Challenge!

Looking for a great way to activate your inner Everyday Advocate and motivate your colleagues to do the same? Then volunteer to be a part of our very first Everyday Advocacy Challenge (EAC) cohort!

We're looking for 10-15 ALSC members to take our eight-week Back-to-School advocacy challenge between September 1-October 20, 2015.

Here's the scoop on what we'll be asking of you:

- Commit to completing eight consecutive Take Action Tuesday challenges on the back-to-school theme.
- Collaborate with your EAC cohort over the eight-week period, sharing successes and troubleshooting issues via e-mail list or other online sharing tool.
- Write a post for the ALSC blog about your EAC experience.
- Nominate another ALSC member to participate in the next EAC beginning November 2.

We're also exploring possibilities for a promotional Everyday Advocacy video, so we may ask our EAC participants to be a part of that, too!

Interested? Awesome! Submit the EAC webform, and we'll be in touch with all the details.

Questions? Also awesome! E-mail us at [everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com](mailto:everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com), and we'll respond ASAP.

## Take Action Tuesday Blog

Back in May, we launched the Take Action Tuesday blog, an online collection of our weekly Everyday Advocacy challenges to help you be informed, engage with your community, speak out, get inspired, and share your advocacy story.

If you haven't had a chance to check out the blog yet, why not take a peek at the Everyday Advocacy website and see what you've been missing? You'll find links to the current month's challenges as well as archives of previous ones.

Have an idea for a Take Action Tuesday challenge or want to share your experience with one of them? E-mail us at [everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com](mailto:everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com) with the details!

## Connect with Congress During District Days!

Did you know summer break isn't just for kids? Even Congress gets some time away from Washington, D.C., during the heart of the summer months.

It's no day at the beach for our U.S. senators and representatives, though! Many are back in their home districts to hear from constituents about the issues that matter most to them.

Taking place this year from August 3 to September 4, District Days coincides nicely with the end of our Summer Reading Programs and the beginning of the busy back-to-school season. Consider inviting your

legislators to a library program or visiting their offices to share all the ways your library makes a difference for children and families in your community.

Need help finding your elected officials? Check out the shiny new Legislative Action Center.

Have a District Days success story to share? Submit the Share Your Advocacy Story web form or send the details to [everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com](mailto:everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com).

## **Make Your Case to Attend the 2016 ALSC National Institute**

With your library's 2016 budget plans well underway, now's the perfect time to start making your case to attend the 2016 ALSC National Institute from September 15-17 at the Charlotte (NC) Marriott City Center! You won't want to miss the outstanding learning and networking opportunities you'll have with ALSC colleagues from across the country.

Adapt the 2015 ALA Annual Conference "Making Your Case to Attend" talking points to articulate why you'll be more valuable after participating in the Institute. (Notice that the third bullet reads, "You'll become a more effective advocate at any level." Awesome, right?)

See you in Charlotte next September!

## **Get Inspired!**

### **Burlingame Wins 2015 Sullivan Award**

When you think of awesome Everyday Advocates, you'll definitely want to remember Ann Burlingame, winner of the 2015 Peggy Sullivan Award for Public Library Administrators Supporting Services to Children.

As stated in ALA's March press release, "The Sullivan Award is presented annually to an individual in a library administrator role who has shown exceptional understanding and support of public library service to children."

Read the complete release for details on the 2015 Sullivan Award Committee's unanimous selection of Burlingame, who was presented with the honor during the ALA President's Program at the ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco.

### **Nominations Open for 2015 I Love My Librarian Award**

We bet you know more than a few librarians who make an Everyday Advocacy difference for children and families in their communities. Why not nominate a public or school library colleague for the Carnegie Corporation of New York/New York Times I Love My Librarian Award?

Just complete the online nomination form for a public librarian, a school librarian, or even a college, community college, or university librarian, but act fast! Nominations close September 28, 2015.

### **Awesome Elevator Speeches**

With District Days and the back-to-school season right around the corner, now's the time to perfect your elevator speech and give it a whirl! Here are three examples from ALSC members who've sent us their speeches by submitting the Get Your Advocacy Button! webform:

**Ellen Norton**, Berkeley, IL

"I am a children's librarian, and I help inspire children and families to explore and create using literature, technology, and imagination."

**Robin Nyzio**, Pawtucket, RI

"Talking to kids and their grown-ups about books and the library is the most important part of what I do as a children's librarian. I make sure that everyone who works through the doors of the Children's Library feels welcome, no matter what they like to read or how much or little they read, is key!"

**Janet Weber**, Tigard (OR) Public Library

"I don't just read to babies. I teach adults how to develop early literacy skills in their babies. This helps babies to learn the skills necessary to learn how to read when they get older, thus preparing them to be successful in school and life-long learners."

## **September Is Library Card Sign-Up Month**

As public library professionals, we know we're handing kids the world when we hand them library cards. The best part? Our school library colleagues know that, too. That makes September the perfect time to collaborate with the schools in your community. It's more than just back-to-school business. It's Library Card Sign-Up Month!

Why not capitalize on this fantastic opportunity to advocate jointly with local schools to spread the word about library magic this fall?

Check out It's All in the Cards, the September 2014 ALSC blog post from the AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School-Public Library Cooperation, for ten ways you can work with your public or school library colleagues.

## **Calendar**

August - Congressional District Days

September - Library Card Sign-Up Month

September 27-October 3 - Banned Books Week

September 30 - Banned Websites Awareness Day

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<http://www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/>