

April 13, 2009|By Linda Trischitta Staff Writer and Staff Researcher Barbara Hijek contributed to this report.

LIGHTHOUSE POINT — What does it take to become Florida's Librarian of the Year?

For Doreen Gauthier, it means partnering with schools and libraries to offer distance learning; offering patrons the latest technology and products, and earning peer respect while mentoring aspiring librarians.

Gauthier's vision will be rewarded in Orlando next month when the Florida Library Association will give her its prestigious prize. She was nominated by longtime Administrative Secretary Cathy Anthony, Mayor Fred Schorr and Commissioner Sandy Johnson for the recognition, which will include a plaque.

"If the people who work for and with you all these years place your name in nomination, it's a tribute to the esteem in which one is held," said Gauthier, 67.

"It's very gratifying that I've touched so many lives here," she said about her 30-year vocation.

Gauthier has led the library through five locations and two major construction projects.

She helped decorate its 2-year-old, 8,000-square-foot space with marine blue walls and carpet, tropical fish patterns on fabrics and skiff-shaped bookshelves.

The city named the facility after her last year.

She received a master's degree in library and information science at age 54 from the University of South Florida at Tampa.

"Life doesn't end at 30," she said.

As libraries have become e-government centers for patrons seeking social service and other information, staffers have to do much more than match a reader with a good novel.

"I love the people and the opportunity to interact with everyone from toddlers to the toddling," she said about a job that requires a lot of detective skills.

"I had a little old lady who cannot read but wants books on CD, and she doesn't want them if it's not racy. There is a surprise every day."

Not all surprises are good. Some of the Sept. 11 terrorists used the library before the attacks. Gauthier lost a lot of sleep when she learned about that.

"We were one of the few libraries open at night," she said. "And we weren't the only one [that had computers they used]."

Library Circulation Supervisor Rosemary Wilson has seen Gauthier at work at 5:30 a.m.

"She has mothers coming in with babies that she read to 30 years ago," Wilson said. "She has devoted her whole life to the library."



Gauthier calls the library "the third place," after work and home, "a centerpiece of knowledge and culture for the community."

The community has supported it with money - she estimated \$1.25 million raised for library expansion and capital projects - and energy from 90 volunteers.

The library's many programs for reading, tutoring, foreign languages, exercise and field trips are paid for with city taxes and a small amount of state aid.

"She's one of the people that get things done and is not interested in the glory," said Alicia McHugh, branch manager at the Sunset Strip library in Sunrise.

McHugh lobbied the state government for municipal libraries with her friend in the late 1980s, when McHugh was a librarian in Oakland Park.

"I am thrilled that this is happening for her."

Staff Researcher Barbara Hijek contributed to this report. Linda Trischitta can be reached at ltrischitta@SunSentinel.com or 954-356-4233.

2009 Florida Library Association Award Winners

