

Library Legislative Day 2017

Sarah Steinbacher

Adult Services Supervisor, Rhinelander District Library

First and foremost, thank you again to those at WVLS who elected me as the recipient of this year's Library Legislative Day scholarship. What an enlightening experience! I am so appreciative of the opportunity to have represented our Northwoods systems libraries. I know I am not alone in facing the challenge of cheerleading for our libraries when many of us introverts feel more comfort in our respective buildings with our shelves of books. But alas, each and every one of us knows when getting into the profession of librarianship, one of our most important roles, if not the most important, is being advocates for educational progress, community conversations, and free flowing information. These are the things we all love about our libraries, and these are the issues we emphasize when given the opportunity to meet with our local legislators.

We started this year's LLD with a morning briefing that involved a whole team of 185 Wisconsin librarians, trustees, and representatives. Though we were all from different regions of the state and all seeing different legislators, our mission was the same: promote how our libraries play an integral role in the lives of our citizens. The overarching goal during this year's LLD was to stress how our community libraries would benefit from a 1.5 million dollar increase in state segregated funds in FY18 in order to continue providing the services so essential for every Wisconsin resident. In particular, we focused on three core services we intend to improve with an increase in funding: broadband access, workforce development, and lifelong learning.

Our first meeting of the day was scheduled with Senator Tom Tiffany, and as if it was meant to be, we bumped into the Senator in the elevator on the way to the meeting! It was great having the chance to shake his hand and express our gratitude that he took the time to schedule a meeting to discuss our libraries. Though the Senator had another engagement to attend, we were able to sit down with his aide, Tim Duffy, and had a wonderful dialogue about our libraries and the upcoming budget plans.



In the afternoon we met with Representative Rob Swearingen and were greeted with a big smile and a very proud display of his library support. We also met with Representative Mary Felzkowski's aide, Reid Rasmussen. Both of these meetings generated great discussion and we all left feeling quite positive about their support.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention the stimulating conversations that took place during our 8 hour round trip car ride. There is nothing that really compares to talking shop with two directors and a former director. The knowledge and experiences that were shared will stick with me for a very long time.

All and all, I think most of us from WVLS felt we had a successful, positive day advocating for our libraries, and I personally learned such a wealth of information from the experience and my colleagues. I thank you again for the wonderful opportunity and sincerely hope it won't be my last time attending a Wisconsin Library Legislative Day. Go Team!

