



PRESS RELEASE

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Library's John Stelly Honored as Louisiana Library Director of the Year

Gonzales, LA - For more than a month, Ascension Parish Library Director John Stelly walked in and out of the library's business offices, keeping quiet about a significant achievement - he'd been named Louisiana's Library Director of the Year. The selection committee chairman said his nomination demonstrated exceptional merit as the stand-out choice. The honor was a surprise; he's only been in the role for three years. But in that time, his impact and leadership have earned recognition from colleagues.

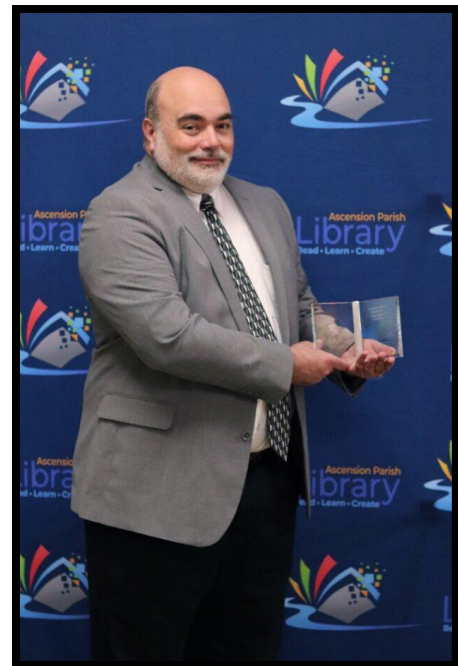
A former library director from a neighboring parish called Stelly the 'most level-headed, personable, and wonderful director I've met in my professional career.'

"We don't tell people enough when they're doing a good job," said APL's Adult Services Librarian, Chriselle Henry, who had secretly submitted Stelly's name for the award. "Acknowledging someone's efforts and contributions can drive them to do even more."

Henry has worked with Stelly for 20 years. She highlighted how library services to the community have expanded under Stelly's leadership at the Louisiana Library Association conference in Shreveport.

Some of the initiatives launched under Stelly's leadership include:

- Creating the Partners Advancing Literacy (PAL) program, where organizations, businesses, and individuals can sponsor library programs, services, and capital projects.
- Launching Excel Adult High School, an accredited online program where adults 21 and older can earn their high school diploma.
- Beginning a Seed Library for residents to start a small backyard garden and learn about healthy living.
- Opening the Study Commons, a satellite library at the Wag Center in Donaldsonville, in partnership with the Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office.
- Overseeing two building projects, the renovation of the Donaldsonville library and the construction of a new library in St. Amant. Both projects include new spaces, such





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as a makerspace with creative technology and an audiovisual recording studio that can also be used as a virtual reality room.

Stelly credits the library's success to the efforts of APL employees and the library board.

“Any success I’ve achieved is not mine alone; all of us need the support of others to do what we do,” Stelly told the crowd at the awards ceremony. “The encouragement from our library board motivates us to continually innovate and enhance our offerings. Our staff are smart, creative, compassionate, and always looking for new ways to serve the community. This award belongs to them as much as it does me.”

John Stelly was named director of APL in March 2021, following a short term as interim director after the passing of longtime library director Angelle Deshautelles in 2020. Stelly’s dedication to the library dates to 2001, when he was appointed assistant library director by Deshautelles. Before that, he was the reference librarian in Gonzales.

Ascension Parish Library congratulates John Stelly and looks forward to continuing its mission under his leadership.

About APL

Ascension Parish Library (APL) is an award-winning library system committed to providing opportunities for lifelong learning to all ages. APL delivers needed resources through traditional library services, digital materials, and innovative programs. Ascension Parish Library encourages residents to read, learn, and create by visiting their local library.

To learn more, visit <https://www.myAPL.org/>.

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