



Friends & Foundation *of the* Rochester Public Library

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Ned Davis, Executive Director of the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library, awarded the 2018 Intellectual Freedom Award of the New York Library Association.

“Ned Davis acts as a facilitator by clearing obstacles and finding resources that allow diverse stories to be told and voices to be heard.” – Patricia Uttaro, Director, Rochester Public Library & Monroe County Library System

“I am heartened by Ned’s enthusiastic support and rolled-up sleeves approach to ensuring the Central Library allows residents the ability to read, seek information, and speak freely about everything.”

– FFRPL Board President Peg Glisson

Rochester, NY – Ned Davis, Executive Director of the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library (FFRPL), has been awarded the 2018 Intellectual Freedom Award of the New York Library Association (NYLA), to be presented at NYLA’s Annual Conference in Rochester November 9.

The American Library Association defines Intellectual Freedom as “the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored ... Libraries provide the ideas and information, in a variety of formats, to allow people to inform themselves.”

FFRPL Board President Peg Glisson says, “I have worked with Ned for nearly eight years as a Friends & Foundation Trustee and am heartened by his enthusiastic support and rolled-up sleeves approach to ensuring the Central Library allows residents the ability to read, seek information, and speak freely about everything.”

Ned Davis has served as the Executive Director of FFRPL since Fall 2010. FFRPL is the 501(c)(3) public charity that raises funds, presents programs, supports special projects, helps create specialized spaces, and purchases supplemental materials and equipment for the Rochester Public Library. In the eight years since Davis began leading the organization, FFRPL has transferred to the Library nearly \$5M in funding support, and presented and supported hundreds of programs.

Davis says, “It is an incredible honor to receive NYLA’s Intellectual Freedom Award, which I gratefully accept on behalf of the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library. It is a privilege to lead this organization, and it is fitting that FFRPL is being recognized for its decades-long history of offering a diverse array of socially relevant programs and services to this magnificent Library and for this community.”

In her nomination, Library Director Patricia Uttaro noted, “Under Ned’s direction, the Friends & Foundation of RPL has pursued an aggressive agenda of bringing current, often controversial subjects to the library in the form

of book reviews, lectures, discussions, collections, conferences and exhibits. He has assembled teams of community members who, through their personal connections, bring in experts on topics including the digital divide, race, gender, gun control, hydro fracking, and immigration. Ned is not afraid to tackle cutting edge topics, often before they become ‘issues’ ...”

According to Uttaro, “In the nearly 10 years I have worked with Ned, I have never known him to back away from a controversial issue. For example, when told there might be protesters at a lecture on gun control, Ned’s response was not to cancel the event but to beef up security and personally stand at the door to make sure all his guests were safe.”

Representative examples of programs held during Ned’s tenure, as cited by Uttaro in her nomination, include:

Conversations on Race, a series of small-group discussions led by trained facilitators, and held throughout the community. The Conversations on Race began in partnership with the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Non-Violence, and ran from 2010 through Fall 2018.

Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here – a major art exhibit held at the Central Library in 2014 which featured artist books from around the world, created in response to the 2007 bombing of a street of booksellers in Iraq. The exhibit was accompanied by series of programs and discussion events that focused on terrorism, the Middle East, Islam and cultural conversations. More than 20,000 visitors engaged with the exhibit during its showing.

July ‘64: Remembering the Race Riots & Rebellion of 1964 – Also in 2014, Ned and FFRPL led an effort to create an exhibit and program series focused on the race riots that occurred in Rochester in July 1964. Ned’s efforts led to a series of programs for all ages that examined race and community relations in Rochester and included screenings and discussions of the documentary film *July ‘64*.

Because of Women Like Her – This year-long series of events and exhibits in 2017 celebrated the centennial of women winning the right to vote in New York State. Ned and FFRPL partnered with the Rochester Public Library and multiple community organizations throughout the region to create an exhibit that has been seen by more than 140,000 people onsite and throughout the region via traveling versions.

The Anthony Mascioli Rainbow Dialogues – Following a bequest by a Rochester resident who wanted to preserve and share the history of the local LGBTQ community, Ned created a partnership between the Library and multiple agencies, including the Out Alliance and the ImageOut film festival. As a result, the Rochester Public Library acquired several of the archives of the Out Alliance, which became the cornerstone for a one-day conference in 2018 that focused on dialogue about LGBTQ issues.

Davis works in partnership with the FFRPL Board of Trustees (and boards of Rochester Public Library, Monroe County Library System and the Reynolds Library Board), as well as the Library’s director, senior management team and staff. Last year Davis was elected to the American Library Association’s *United For Libraries* Board, supporting Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations.

He previously worked as Assistant Director for Communications, Public Relations & Marketing for the University of Florida Health Science Center Libraries, and holds an MA in English and bachelor’s degrees in both English and History from the University of Florida. Davis also plays several musical instruments of and with varying degrees of difficulty and skill.

He is married to Monroe Community College President Anne M. Kress. Ned and Anne have two teenagers: Harper Kress Davis and Penn Kress Davis.

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