From Potluck to Project:
Cultivating Bite-Sized Community-Led Initiatives
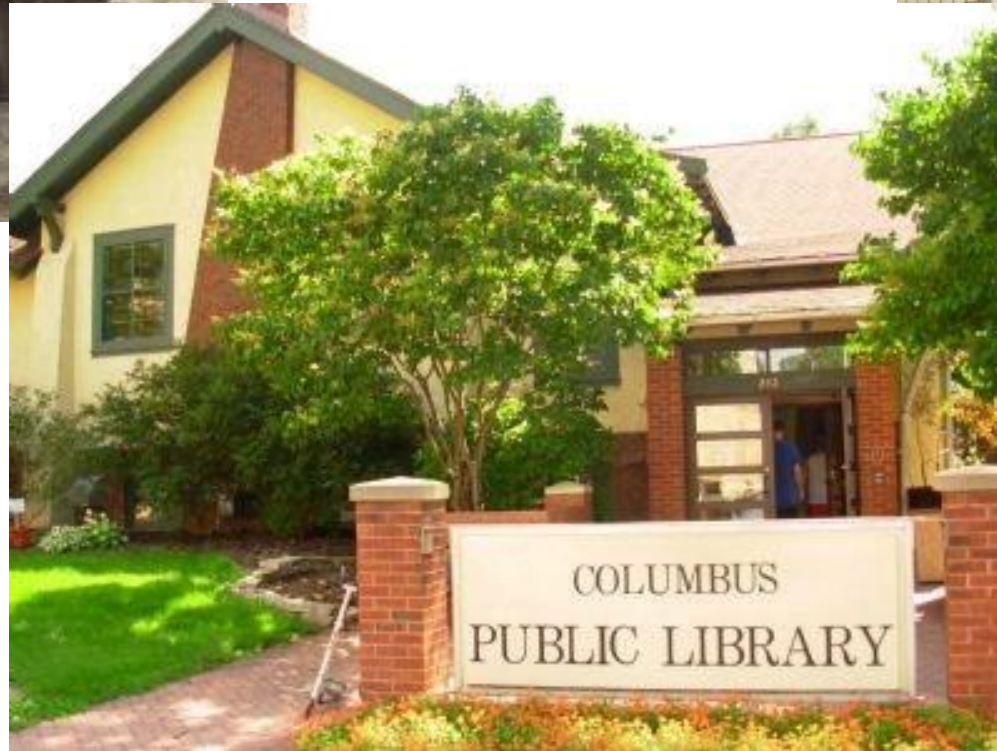
WVLS Directors Retreat October 2017

Deb Haeffner
Citizen, Columbus, Wisconsin
(South Central Library System Building and
Design Consultant)

Cindy Fesemyer
Director, Columbus Public Library
Columbus, Wisconsin

Columbus Public Library, Wisconsin

Tradition

Innovation

Libraries Transforming Communities

- LTC was an initiative of the American Library Association (ended Dec. 1, 2015)
- In partnership with nonprofit Harwood Institute for Public Innovation
- Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Sought to **strengthen libraries' roles as core community leaders and change agents**.

turn outward {verb}

1. The act of seeing and hearing those in the community and acting with intentionality to create change;

2. A reorientation toward the public; a posture;

3. A framework for making choices about public life.

"The time has come for a new vision of public libraries in the United States. Communities need public libraries—more people are visiting them and using their services, materials and programs than ever before—but **communities' needs continue to change.**"

Amy Garmer
Rising to the Challenge:
Re-Envisioning Public Libraries
The Aspen Institute

And, so . . . . .

Libraries Transforming Communities

Based on the Harwood Institute's practice of "Turning Outward" – **making the community, not the library, the focus of our efforts.**

- Taking measures to better understand your community
- Changing processes and thinking to make library work more community-focused
- Being proactive to community issues
- Putting community aspirations first

Public Knowledge

What it is: Information directly from and about the lived experience of community members

Libraries have been connecting people with knowledge for centuries.

Why it matters: It is *authentic (and actionable)*

Why the library?

- Why not?
- And if not us, then who?

Community Aspirations

ALA Libraries Transforming Communities & the Harwood Institute

➢ASK Exercise

➢Aspirations Exercise

➢Turn Outward Quiz

➢Community Conversations

➢Something Special for YOUR Community

FREE DOWNLOAD: "A Step-by-Step Guide to 'Turning Outward' to Your Community"
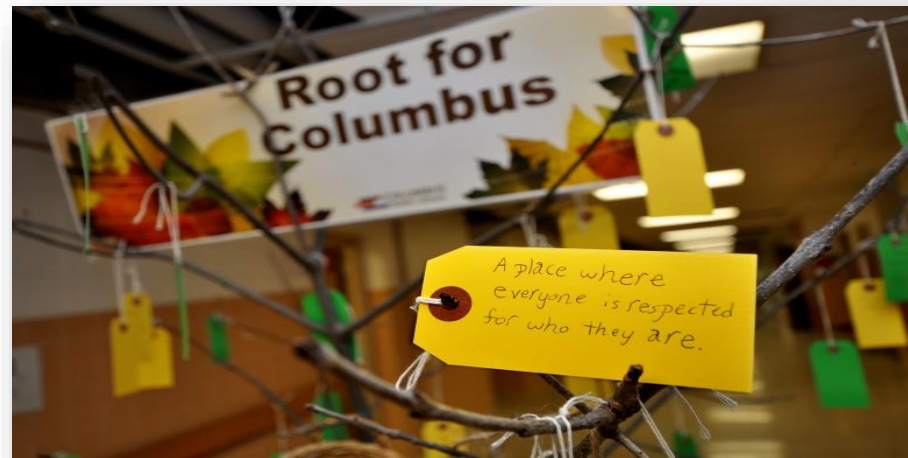This free 88-page workbook contains 15 tools broken into four easy-to-follow steps:
First 30 Days: Getting Started
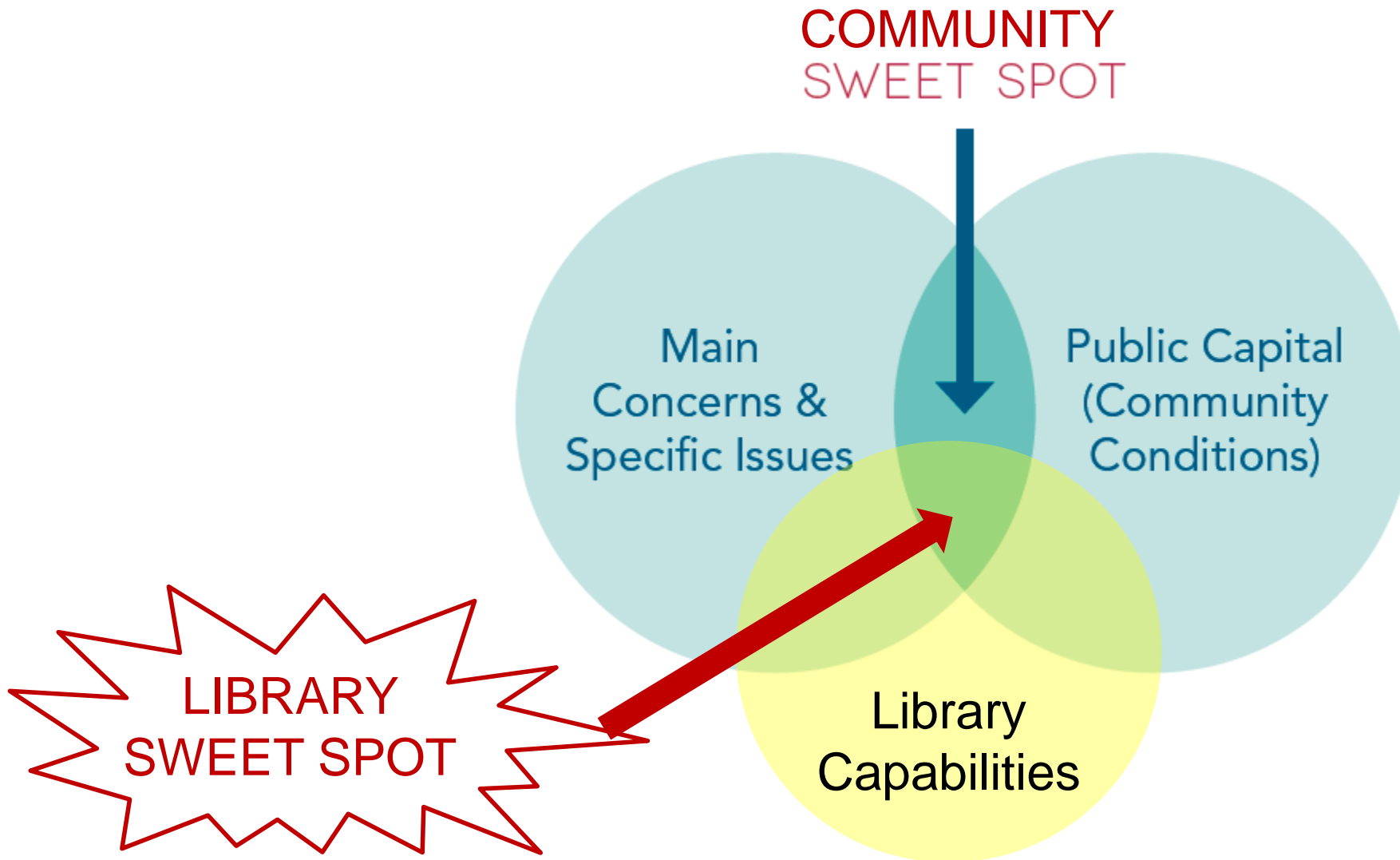30 - 60 Days: Going into the Community
60 - 90 Days: Sharing What You Learn
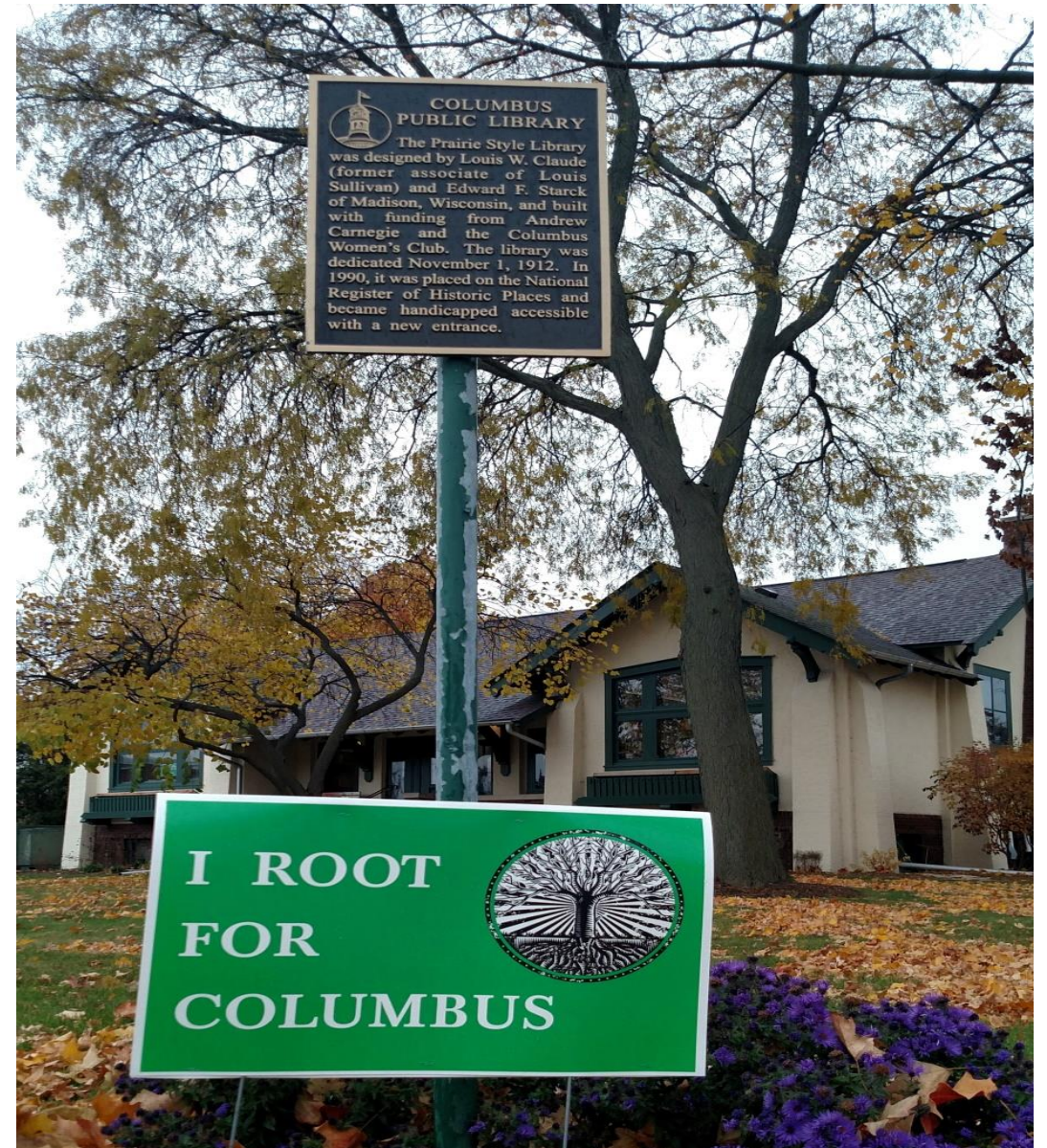90 Days and Beyond: Taking Action
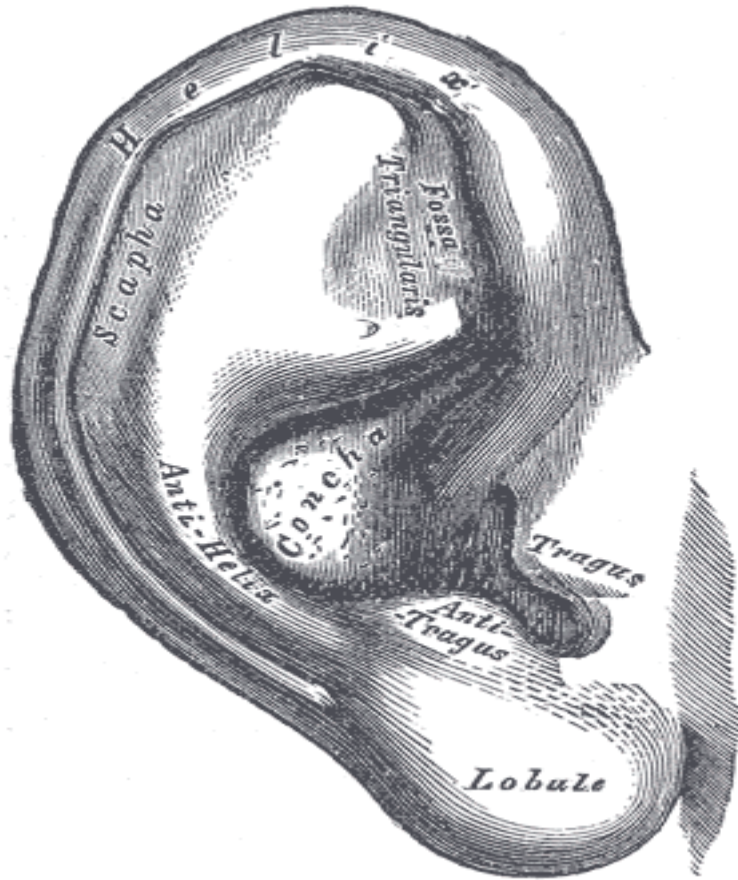
"Root for Columbus" campaign

The Sweet Spot

Root for Columbus brand and program

What we heard

- Columbus wants a welcoming and vibrant community for all.
- They talk about the lack of opportunity for boundary-crossing social interaction.

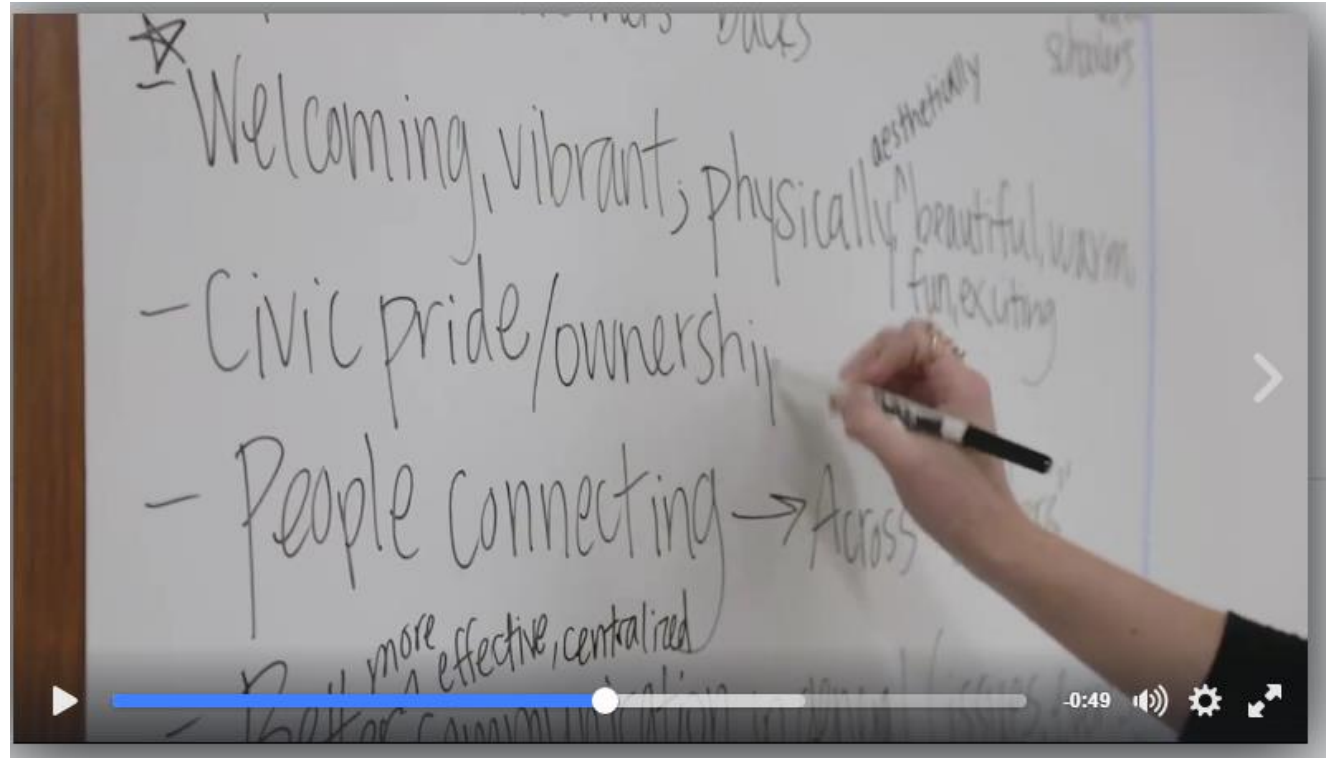# Root for Columbus ACTION Potluck Partners

CHANGE AGENTS
- Library
- Other City departments
- Civic Clubs
- Other community orgs
- Community leaders
- Citizens

Root for Columbus ACTION Potluck Leadership

- A couple of months before the potluck
  - Brainstorm your R4C citizen leadership
  - Invite them to a planning meeting
  - Library and citizen leadership plan themes and set agenda
  - Facilitators, greeters and table wranglers are appointed
  - Publicize the event

http://paulsnewsline.blogspot.com/2016/03/the-columbus-wi-public-library-case.html

Root for Columbus ACTION Potluck Themes

- Special Themes
  - How can we continue working together like we did after the storm?
  - Special holiday offerings
  - Special summer offerings
  - Current pop up gallery event

- Regular themes
  - Art
  - Environment
  - Whole Community
  - Families

Root for Columbus ACTION Potluck Day of

- The Potluck
  - Set out table themes
  - Share successes from last time
  - Whole group brainstorm on themes— sticky notes on posters
  - Theme and report on poster ideas
  - Small group work by theme
    - Create Project plan
    - Leader
    - Timeline
    - Share contact info
  - Share new project success (or not) at next potluck

Root for Colum bus ACTION Potluck Planning Guide

- Project Title
- Description
- Chairperson
- Other team members
- Timeline
- Specific tasks and who will do them
- Resources needed (more people, $, supplies, etc)
- Next team meeting
- Everyone's contact info

Root for Columbus ACTION Potluck Projects

Community Reminisce

Chalk Walk
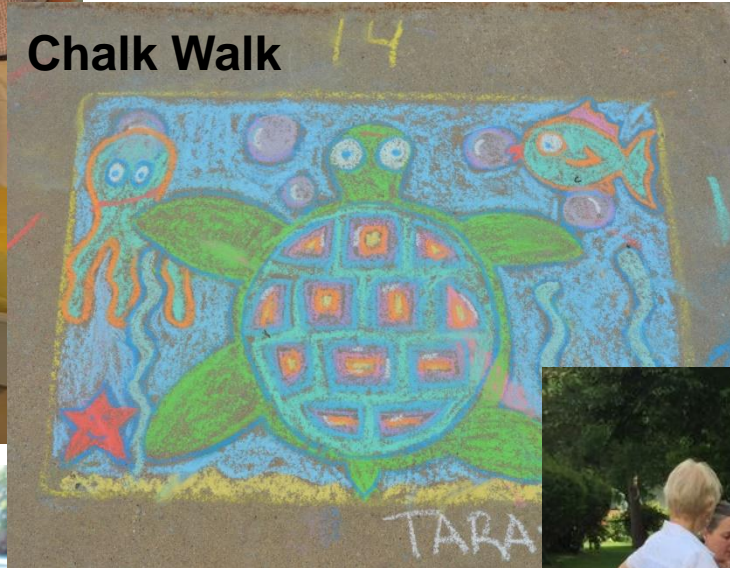
Park Clean Up

Gnomes Away From Home

COLUMBUS WIS

Garden Tour

Libraries Engaging Communities
BE THE CHANGE they want to see

- Learn the community's vision for itself
- Have patience; change is hard
- Model positive behaviors
- Create and maintain strong partnerships
- Empower citizens to lead and participate in change
- Find a support network for project success and failure
- Empower library staff by transforming their roles within the building and within the community
- Grow a thick skin because change agents are sometimes disrespected
- Find a support network for self care
- Say *YES*. Say it ALL THE TIME!

Resources

- ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities

- "A Step-by-Step Guide to 'Turning Outward' to Your Community"

- View a free, 60-minute webinar about how three libraries are using the "turning outward" approach: "Go Out & Play: Community Engagement through Turning Outward"

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920-623-5910

Thank You!