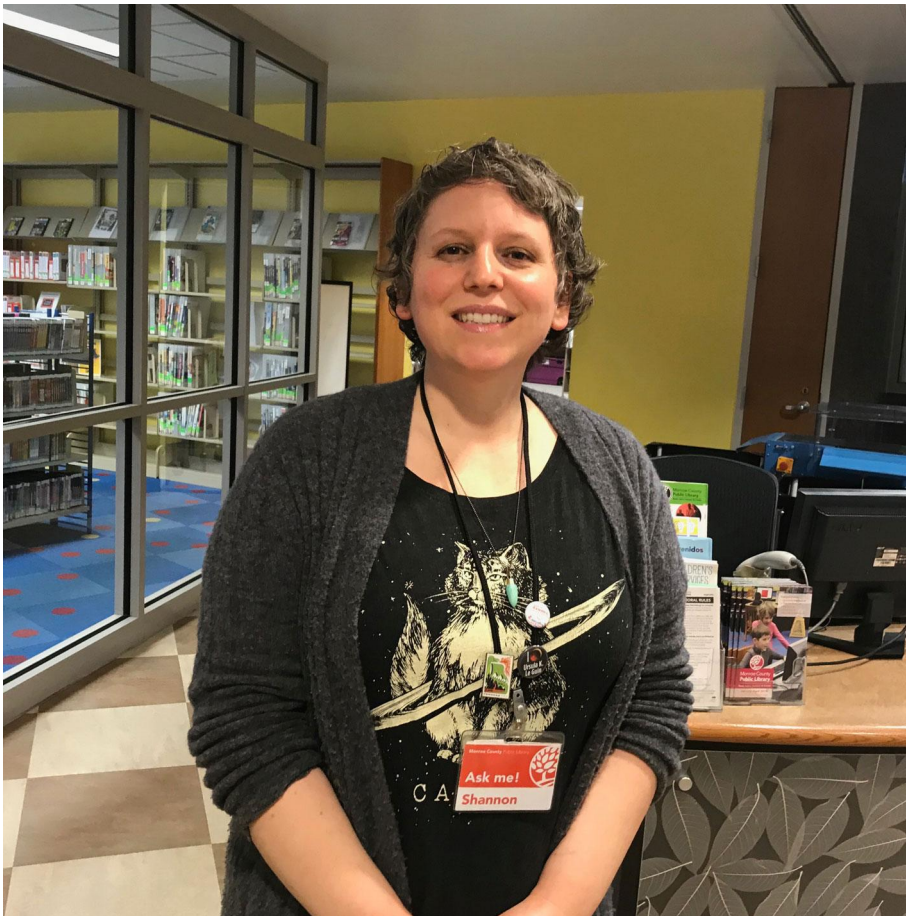


Pioneer Grant to Reduce Library Barriers for Domestic Violence Survivors



After years of working in west coast bookstores and developing a specialty in rare books, Shannon Bowman-Sarkisian is now studying to be a librarian at Indiana University and working as an Information Assistant at the Library. Searching for meaningful opportunities to work on behalf of our community, Shannon applied for and received the 2019 Pioneer Grant.

The Pioneer Grant invites Library employees to submit their enterprising ideas and lead the way to a knowledgeable, inclusive, and engaged community empowered by the Library. Projects must be innovative and beneficial to the community. The Friends of the Library provide funds to make the grant project possible.

Shannon recently engaged with a patron who couldn't provide proof of permanent residence in Monroe County, one of the few requirements to be a Library cardholder. Shannon learned that the patron was displaced from her residence as a result of domestic violence. However, the patron needed to access Library services. Shannon wondered if this was a common problem in our community.

Shannon reached out to Middle Way House to learn more. Sure enough, she was told that displaced survivors often encounter difficulties accessing services due to the lack of a permanent address.

Shannon began forming her grant project??Creating Access for Violence Survivors (CAVS).

"The grant application came out about the same time I had the interaction with this patron and I wanted to know what could be done to help," Shannon said. "There?s a gap in the accessibility of our services, so how do we reduce that?"

Shannon?s project has five goals:

- To create Library protocol for Monroe County residents who are in hiding or in transitional housing due to escaping domestic violence.
- To train Library service staff on domestic violence and related issues.
- To reduce Library access barriers for domestic violence survivors.

- To enable Middle Way House residents to access eLibrary and digital learning tools by providing curated iPads and LeapPad tablets.
- To provide outreach and information about Library services to residents at The Rise and others who use Middle Way House services.

"Applying for the project grant was very intimidating for me because I'm an information assistant and am relatively new to the library," Shannon said. "Getting this grant and studying to be a Librarian feels like I'm on the right path. It's really important to me, and I think, to my community."

In keeping with the Library's mission of equitable access and inclusion, Shannon's project has identified and aims to answer a real need in our community.

"Survivors will benefit greatly from Shannon's presence and compassion," said Marilyn Wood, Library Director. "We appreciate her thoughtfulness and extensive research in developing this project."

Posted by Paula G.O. on February 28, 2019

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