

# LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

2024 Q4



## IMPACT *of* VOLUNTEERING

Fueling Growth, Connection, and Shaping Our Community

“ If you want to lift yourself up,  
lift up someone else. ”

Booker T Washington

MAKING AN IMPACT

# JANE IMBER

by Tara Trenary, photo by Steven Hertzog

LAWRENCE PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

Using experience gained during years working in a particular field can be helpful for retired volunteers.

Becoming a volunteer in the community offers many positive ways for people who want to improve their lives and enhance their overall well-being. Whether you want to simply share experiences and get to know others, advance your career by networking or learning valuable new skills, or simply feel a sense of purpose by giving back, there are many ways this meaningful work can be beneficial while making a real difference in the lives of others.

As a former elementary school librarian, spending time giving back to the Lawrence Public Library (LPL) was a no-brainer for Jane Imber. "As a retired person, I feel I have time to give back to the community in a way that was difficult when I was employed. I knew I wanted to do something meaningful that would benefit children and adults. The public library serves everyone and was a natural fit for me ..." she says.

Imber volunteers in the Children's Area of the library with materials that people in the community donate for the Friends & Foundation Book Sales, which generate much-needed funds for summer reading programs and other special events sponsored by the library. These sales are usually held in April, July and October, with smaller sales occurring each month. They raise more than \$100,000 a year for library programs.

"I don't think I can accurately convey the awe-inspiring way Jane quickly organizes a towering mountain of unsorted books, leaving only calm in her wake," says Angela Hyde, LPL Friends & Foundation program coordinator, who facilitates communication between volunteers, LPL staff and the public. "You really have to try your hand at the task to appreciate the lightning-fast decision-making involved."

The Library Friends & Foundation provides access and opportunities for Lawrence community members to learn, connect, create and grow, she adds. Money raised from the book sales goes directly back to the community through the library and provides funding for free programs for everyone.

"Raised funds provide 100% of library programs," Hyde explains. "Public funds buy the books, pay the staff and take care of the building. Donated books fund all that extra fun stuff you think of when you think about the library: Summer Reading, author talks, storytimes, book clubs, Dottie (the mobile outreach vehicle), the fish tanks."

Public service agencies like the library serve everyone in the community, Imber explains. Because money to support programs is limited, volunteering with the Friends & Foundation is a great way to raise money for the library and have fun at the same time. "I believe access to books is critical for developing readers and creating a literate, thoughtful society," she says.

As a book lover, Imber says it's difficult to know what to do with books she is finished with. "The Friends & Foundation is a way for people to feel good about donating books in good condition that they no longer want," she adds. "It's always interesting to see the variety of books that come through the donation box."

Hyde says LPL offers volunteers a community that works toward a shared goal as a team. They get to interact with other readers and have impromptu book talks. LPL also offers flexibility, so volunteers can drop in as they have time.

"Volunteering is a mutually beneficial investment in our community and our society," she continues. "Donating funds is always helpful, but donating your time and talent can make donated funds go further. I think volunteering is a more impactful way we can support our community. When we volunteer, we feel like we are a part of something bigger, and it can change our brain for the better."

Imber says she enjoys volunteering at LPL for many reasons, including getting to know and making friends with other volunteers, and the flexible hours. Plus, "I feel I am putting books and good, affordable reading material in the hands of children and families."

She explains she enjoys using some of the skills she acquired working as a school librarian, and it's a great opportunity to recycle materials for people to access not only at the book sales but also with community groups such as Just Food, the Transit Hub and the Harvesters BackSnack program.

"I am just a very small part of a very large, committed group of volunteers who contribute many, many hours sorting through donations, checking books that can be resold on Amazon, organizing sales and raising money for the library in a variety of ways," Imber emphasizes.

Hyde believes Imber is motivated by fostering a love of reading in the youngest community members. "She seems to get joy in knowing that her work will distribute stories into the community. Jane devoted her working life to fostering that love of reading and learning. She's still providing this service to Lawrence kids in her retired life." ▲



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