



For Immediate Release
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AMANDA RODARTE IS 2022 RECIPIENT OF HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY'S CAROLINE M. HEWINS SCHOLARSHIP



Amanda Rodarte.

(Hartford, CT) – Hartford Public Library is pleased to announce that Amanda Rodarte of Los Angeles, California, is the 2022 recipient of the Caroline M. Hewins Scholarship, given annually to promising library school students who intend to become children's librarians.

Amanda began serving as a volunteer reader at Los Angeles Public Library in 2014 and later joined the library staff as a messenger clerk while completing her undergraduate degree.

It wasn't until several years ago that Amanda came to the realization she wanted to go back to school and pursue a career as a children's librarian. As a person of color from a working-class background, Amanda says she has seen firsthand the many effects impoverished

neighborhoods experience when it comes to literacy and resources. She is studying for her Master of Library and Information Science degree at the University of Southern California and expects to graduate in December.

“It wasn’t until the pandemic that I started really thinking ‘I wish I could work in an organization where I can help people, empower them, share resources,’” Amanda says. “I had that lightbulb moment. It’s unfortunate it took me many years to realize. Nonetheless I realized it and I’m going for it. This is what I want to do.”

Tell us a little bit about your experience volunteering and working in libraries.

I never went to the library as a child. When I was about 16 years old I desperately wanted to exit ESL (English as a second language) classes and forced myself to start reading. I met a librarian who didn’t make me feel welcome ... and so I would only pick up books but not come inside the library or really spend time there. A couple years later I found out about a program where you can read to children and because I never went to the library, and struggled with literacy as a child, I wanted to encourage children in my community to read. What started off as a volunteering position turned into a job and has evolved into my passion.

What are your goals for your library career?

I want to improve the library experience for immigrants. My mother was an immigrant, she didn’t go to the public library, she didn’t know about the resources or programs that were available. ... I think a lot of people fail to realize that libraries are exclusive in other countries or they don’t exist. People may not know and they need to be guided toward our resources.

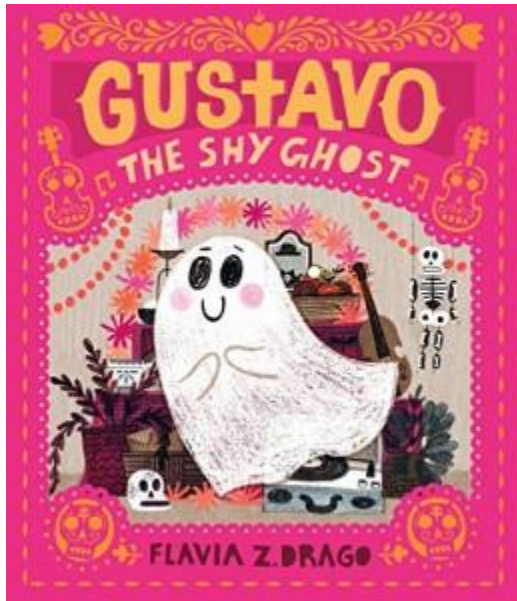
Another thing I’d like to work on is more programs that promote social awareness and inclusivity. As a child my world was very small, I lived predominantly in a Mexican community. I’d love to show children at a young age about different ethnicities, cultures and customs. ... Libraries are no judgment zones. We have a space where everyone is welcome no matter what background you have.

I really like the modern-day librarian because it’s just totally different from the old concept of librarianship. It’s a lot more active, community-oriented and hopefully once I become a librarian I’m able to change other people’s minds as to what librarianship is like.

What do you enjoy about working with children?

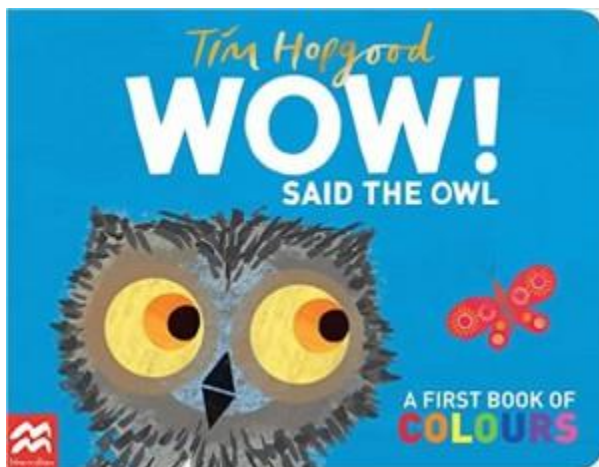
I’ve always loved working with children. After working at the library for a couple years and learning a lot from the children’s librarian I knew I wanted to be in a field where it didn’t feel like I was working, where I was enjoying every moment of it. Children’s librarians have such an impact on children and families. You’re not just working with the children but the family as a whole and providing resources to all of them.

Have any book suggestions?



Gustavo the Shy Ghost
by Flavia Z. Drago

This is a cute story about a shy ghost who wants to make friends but he's quiet, and that's OK. It teaches children to appreciate who they are and that people are going to like you no matter what. You just need to be confident in yourself.



Wow! Said The Owl
by Tim Hopgood

This is perfect for read aloud. Children love it because they get to be expressive and loud whenever the owl says "Wow!"



The Vanishing Half
by Brit Bennett

I like anything that's historical fiction and I really like this book because it has a lot of themes: race, gender identity, education. It really exposes another person's experience. ... I make an effort to try to read books from people of color, that's a big way you can incorporate DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) concepts in your own life.

About the Caroline M. Hewins Scholarship

The Caroline M. Hewins Scholarship Fund was established in 1926 as a tribute to one of the great pioneers in American librarianship in special recognition of her creative work for children throughout the country.

The fund originated by the Hartford Librarian's Club as a personal gift to Miss Hewins on the occasion of her fiftieth anniversary as Librarian of the Hartford Public Library. When Miss Hewins chose to use this gift as a basis for a scholarship award, generous contributions were received from family and friends and professional associates throughout Connecticut and the United States, thus assuring to the Scholarship a national character in keeping with the memory of the Librarian it honors.

The fund is administered by the Hartford Public Library as trustee, and current income permits an annual scholarship award of \$4,000.

The scholarship is open to those who plan to specialize in library work with children: who have received, or are about to receive a four year undergraduate degree; and who have applied for admission to a library school or are already attending a library school accredited by the American Library Association. Preference will be given to applicants who plan to pursue a career in public library service.

About Hartford Public Library

With roots dating to 1774, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children,

youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. www.hplct.org.