

Longtime Literacy and Special Projects Director Retires

by Janie Rutherford, Communications Specialist, and Cindi Hickey, WebJunction Kansas Coordinator

On June 13, the State Library of Kansas retired the "traveling shoes" of a well-recognized team player. Vikki Jo Stewart stepped out of her multi-faceted role as Special Projects Director for the State Library of Kansas and into her new role as retired dynamo.

For 22 years Stewart worked hand-in-hand with Kansas public libraries, conducting workshops to train volunteers, promote literacy, and develop grant writing skills. In recent years, she focused on the development and implementation of special projects for the State Library, including Kansas Reads to Preschoolers, Kansas Notable Books, and the State Librarian's Luncheon and Fundraiser, featured at the Kansas Library Conference. Remember handbags and hats?



Photograph by Joyce Armstrong

At the Kansas Library Conference last April, Stewart was honored with the 2008 Presidential Award from the Kansas Library Association for lifetime achievement and distinguished service to the Kansas library community. Stewart was also recognized by the Friends of Kansas Libraries (FoKL) in 2007 when she received the Duane Johnson Library Leader Award. Stewart's work with the Kansas Reads to Preschoolers project contributed to the project's 2007 Service Recognition Award from Safe Kids Kansas.

Known for her "orange" personality and pithy aphorisms, Stewart brightened library meetings from KPLACE and the Public Library Section fall conference to the Black, White and Read All Over Ball and the State Librarian's Luncheon. Some of the favorites ("Put on your big girl panties and deal with it!" and "I may not be perfect but parts of me are excellent.") adorned the tables at the statewide farewell for Stewart held via ELMeR, the high-definition, video conference network.



Photograph by Cindi Hickey

In retirement, Stewart is looking forward to spending more time with her grandchildren, traveling, and indulging in her hobbies of reading and gardening. A native of El Dorado, Stewart was a longtime resident of Independence before relocating to Leon several years ago. Hats off to Stewart and her star-studded State Library career!