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Thank you so very much! I am absolutely honored to receive this award, the award my kids call "The biggest nerd" award. I want to especially thank Nassau BOCES School Library System, Eva Efron, my Superintendent, Dr. Jack Bierwirth, my Principal, Liz Guercin, and my fellow Herricks Elementary librarians, especially Anne Brusca, who started out as a protégé, and now is a superstar and my partner in crime. Also, Noel Forte, our technology integration facilitator. Together, she and I run the best research program. I also need to thank all the little people...my students....that make me wake up in the morning glad to go to work. Most mornings, anyway.

How did I end up here - today - receiving this award? It doesn't seem that long ago that I was working as a kindergarten TA in Watson School in RVC. OK - it was 16 years ago. My principal, Ralph Campanella, pulled me into his office one day and said that he was putting me into the library the following year. He thought "I would be perfect for that position." I was devastated. I begged him not to do it. It was the last place I wanted to be! I did NOT want to spend my day stamping books and putting them on the shelves. Not only that, I was going to be seeing classes on the days the librarian wasn't there. The next year, there I was, running a library and not having a clue about what I was doing. But, some of my teacher friends said to me, "You are good at this! You should go back to school and get your masters!" I laughed at them. But, eventually, the anxiety about doing something that I didn't feel qualified for got to me, and I enrolled at C.W. Post.

My very first course was with a professor named Bea Baaden. Many of you have taken classes with her. Bea is one of a few key people in my career that have had an impact on the kind of librarian I am today. Bea taught me how to be a TEACHER-LIBRARIAN - and I am deeply grateful for that.

There were others along the way that had a lasting influence on me. I need to thank my first principal at Searingtown School - Nancy Lindenauer. Nancy was the kind of principal that would come up to you and give you a hug and a kiss for no apparent "You ares on tilboxe up t

respective libraries. Unfortunately, across the country, there is a plethora of horror stories - most recently from Los Angeles, where dozens of librarians were summoned to the basement of a downtown building to defend themselves and the profession at a makeshift courtroom. They were questioned by school-district attorneys who were attempting to prove that teacher-librarians are not teachers.

Across the nation, and right here on Long Island, it's starting to feel like bad reality TV. One day you are an AMERICAN IDOL, the next day you are in HELL'S KITCHEN, or even worse, THE BIGGEST LOSER. Some of us have found ourselves on SURVIVOR.

We are being asked to "share the pain" and to make do with less or no help. Or to manage multiple libraries. Some of us have found ourselves on THE APPRENTICE and have heard the dreaded words, "You're fired."

Things are tough out there, and it is very tempting for all of us to become ambivalent as we try to hang on to our library programs. The bottom line is that many of our programs are being chiseled away, bit by bit. We are being told to do more with less. Or being told to just do less.

And you know, it's not just about the budget cuts. We know that it's not just the library programs that are being affected. We know this is happening in every area of education.

But, I think for school librarians, a huge factor is the misconceptions about the vital role teacher-librarians play. Or should I say, the vital role our programs play. So, it is all about perception.

So many think that our libraries are just warehouses of books. I'll never forget some years ago when a teacher said to me after a lesson, "Just read to them, dear, that's all you have to."

And although I am so honored to receive this award, I like to think that the award isn't about ME, but rather about the program I have worked so hard to build in my school.

Here's what WE know:

~We know that today information is free range and that it comes in many different containers.

~We know that our students are hyperconnected and to them, change is status-quo.

~We know that today we live in a world of collective intelligence.

~We know that WE are the ones that are teaching the skills to navigate, process, evaluate, synthesize, sift, and mix, re-create, and contribute new thoughts.

Now more than ever it is integral to make sure that we are not the ONLY ones who know that.

So, make sure your libraries are NOT just book warehouses. Make them places of

So, today it's not an easy task to articulate how we will make it work next year with less. Because it is not in our nature to cut back our services, to be of less help, to care less. On the contrary, it IS our nature to want to give more, to guide, to motivate, to watch a child's eyes sparkle when we open their minds to new ideas. Worrying about how the books will get back on the shelf is not what we want to or need to be figuring out. And it's sad that for many of us, these are the things that keep us up at night.

So, I say, don't just be a 'survivor' - because I know you are all superheroes. And this may really be the time that you have to draw upon your super powers. But do it. It won't be easy. But do it. And advocate for your program. I know there are only so many hours in a day. But do it. No excuses. No whining. As Tom Hanks said in "A League of Their Own," "there's no crying in baseball!" Well, we are in the World Series right now. There's no time for crying --OK, take a little time to cry--I did--- but then get back up and give it your all.

My husband always says to people, "I don't understand what Karen does, but she is damn good at it." Make sure that everyone knows how important you are to those students. What we do has value.

Make sure that you are not the only one who knows what a library in the 21st century is. Don't keep it a secret. Sometimes it's not comfortable to say "look at me" - but you are not saying that, you are saying "look at the value of my program."

Last, I don't want to forget to give a big thank you to my husband and my 2 wonderful kids, who have to put up with a lot, especially when I zone out on my computer.

And thank you again for this award. I am truly thrilled to receive it!

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Check out the Herricks Virtual Library Information & Technology Program Website @ <http://sites.google.com/site/herricksvlmc/home>

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