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Cate Brooks Sweeney Receives Texas Library Association's 2018 Libraries Change Communities Award

AUSTIN –Cate Brooks Sweeney, public services manager at Bee Cave Library, Bee Cave, Texas, won the Texas Library Association's 2018 Libraries Change Communities Award which is given in recognition of a collaborative effort to promote outstanding and innovative library-based initiatives that involve the community and demonstrate good practices.

Sweeney learned about the 25,000 Tuques project which was launched to provide hand-made, wool hats to the 25,000 Syrian refugees that Canada committed to rehome over the coming year and immediately thought of the Bee Cave Library Knitting Club. After gaining the library director's support, she launched the project. Sweeney promoted the project on the library's website, social media, in community newspapers, and by word-of-mouth. Two churches in the community joined the library knitting club on the project, and interest in and popularity of the initiative expanded each week. The Bee Cave Knitting Club held a two-hour knit-in and almost 50 people attended. In the first month, the library collected 494 hats which the Bee Cave Library Friends Group organized and paid to ship.

In response to the project's popularity and ongoing need, Sweeney launched Purl 2: Knit Again. More than 400 hats were made and many were again sent to Canada. However, there was a surplus and Sweeney found another organization that could use the Bee Cave tuques; The Salaam Cultural Museum in Seattle which distributes life-saving supplies to Syrian refugees at the Syria-Jordan border.

The Bee Cave Library Tuques Knitting Project, which began with one person, grew to involve more than 600 individuals and connected the volunteers from Bee Cave with people in Quebec, Newfoundland, and Seattle. Sweeney succeeded in creating a tight knit community and helped to extend the hand of friendship to Syrian refugees proving that libraries do indeed change communities.

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About the Texas Library Association

TLA is the largest state library association in the United States with almost 6,500 members who work in public, school, academic, and special libraries. TLA offers a wide range of services, including advocacy, continuing education, research, and public relations. www.txla.org