

The TIMES

of Middle Country

SERVING CENTEREACH • SELDEN • NORTHERN LAKE GROVE

Volume 10, No. 46

March 5, 2015

\$1.00



File photo by Rachel Shapiro

Initiatives such as the Miller Business Resource Center and the Family Place Libraries helped the library stand out. Below, Logan Fried and his mom, Melissa, work together on a puzzle in the Family Place section of the library's Centereach location.

MCPL named finalist for service award

National Medal for Museum and Library Service winners to be announced this spring

BY BARBARA DONLON

The Middle Country Public Library in Centereach beat out more than 150 applicants from across the United States to become a finalist for the 2015 National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

The medal, which is awarded to five libraries and five museums every year, is the nation's highest honor granted by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent government agency. The award has existed for 21 years and celebrates institutions that demonstrate extraordinary and innovative approaches to serving the public. This is the Middle Country's first time being nominated.

"It's an honor in itself to be a finalist," Library Director Sophia Serlis-McPhillips said.

The library is one of 30 finalists. New York Sen. Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) nominated the library, while former Congressman Tim Bishop sent a letter of support. The library staff then filled out a nomination form detailing its buildings, programs and communities it serves.

The library described two of its initiatives: The Miller Business Resource Center, which offers business resources to businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofits; and Family Place Libraries, a nationwide parent-child program. In 2012, the library received a \$450,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to expand the Family Place program.

Family Place programs encourage learning through play and help parents serve as the primary teacher in their child's

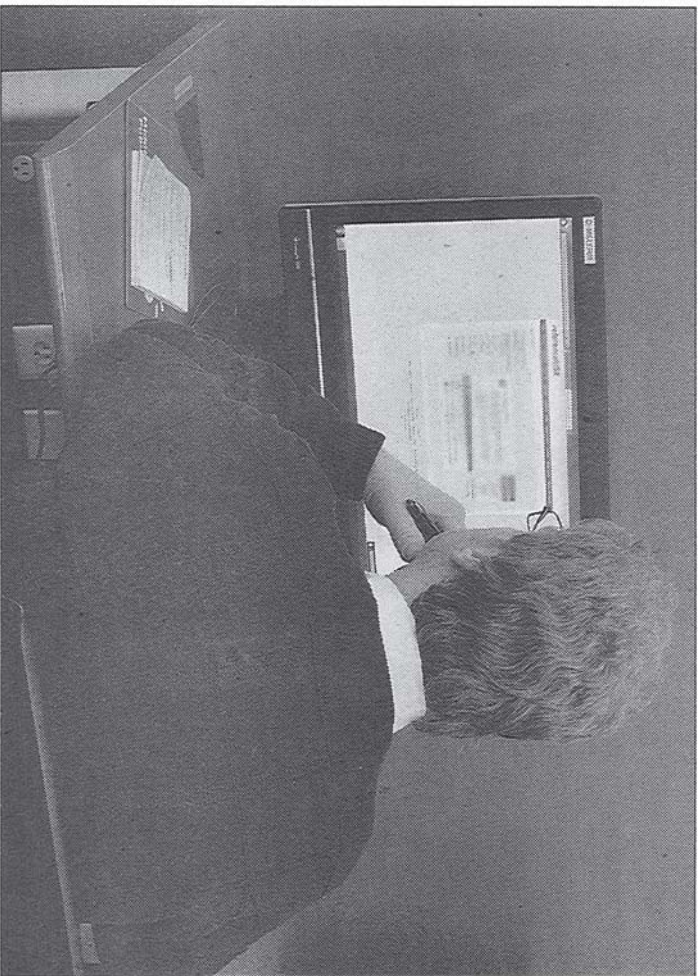


life. The library has a special space where kids can play with puzzles, kitchen sets and blocks along with other toys that help them develop skills. It is also a great place for children to meet other kids.

"Family Place brings together

a lot of key components," said Kathleen Deerr, an MCPL assistant director and national coordinator for Family Place Libraries. "In Family Place we really connect families."

While Family Place serves
MCPL continued on page A8



People utilize the resources at the Miller Business Resource Center at Middle Country Public Library.

Photos by Barbara Doulton

MCPL

Continued from page A1

Younger Middle Country residents, the Miller Business Resource Center caters to adults. It provides patrons with database access at the library and at home, networking opportunities and business classes for anyone in need.

In the past, the center offered classes on business promotion and social media. In addition, the center has career counselors available who meet one-on-one with visitors and help them create or fix résumés.

"It's empowered [center clients] to find out what they need to do," Serlis-

McPhillips said.

Cristina Encalada, a resident who wrote a letter of support for the library, emigrated from Ecuador in 1993 and said the library is the reason she is finally in school studying what she loves — culinary arts. She said she spent many hours, even months, working with a career counselor at the library who helped her make the decision to go to school. She said it was a tough decision between nursing and culinary arts, but the counselor helped her make the right decision: "The reason I'm in college is [because of] the support of the library."

She also credits the library for helping her learn English when she came to

the United States. She said it offered a variety of courses that helped enhance her reading, writing and speaking.

Encalada called the library a wonderful place with heartwarming people who really make a difference, not only with the programs it offers but the staff it has.

"I'm happy I'm a part of it," she said. The programs highlighted in the application were only one part of what makes the library what it is, Serlis-McPhillips said. She and Deerr said if it weren't for the community, the support of elected officials and the staff, the honor would have never been bestowed.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is currently accepting public in-

put on Facebook. Residents who have attended the library can visit the institute's page and share their stories or memories.

Ultimately, the Institute of Museum and Library Services board makes recommendations on what libraries will receive the medal, and the director of the agency makes the final decision in the spring.

Regardless of what the outcome is, Serlis-McPhillips said she is so thankful for how far the library has come and she thanks the public for its ongoing support and visits.

"We're thrilled they recognized the programs," Serlis-McPhillips said. "I feel so much pride, I can't tell you how proud I was. Everyone works so hard."