

## ERIC LASHLEY TRAILBLAZER AWARD 2023 RECIPIENT ANNOUNCED!

On October 18th, the **Friends-sponsored 3rd annual Eric Lashley Trailblazer Award was given to Bethni King, the GPL's Youth Services Team Lead.** The award was created in 2021 in honor of our forward-thinking former library Director, Eric Lashley. Its purpose is to **support and encourage innovative and creative project ideas** generated by library staff members that would not be funded as part of the regular library budget. Each year, Library Staff submits proposals to the FOL Board, who then have the difficult task of selecting a yearly awardee.



Bethni's winning proposal for 2023 is the **Little Poppy Learners program**, which focuses on fostering childhood literacy. This program will support young learners, ages 0-5, on their reading journey, and aligns with our community's need for an early childhood literacy program. Young participants and their caregivers are invited to begin a reading adventure, with the goal of completing 500 books by the age of 5.

Bethni said the idea had been brewing in her mind for several years, tucked away in a "wouldn't it be nice" pile, but "this year, everything seemed to come together, including a fully staffed Youth Services team enthusiastic about the project and the chance to apply for the Eric Lashley award."

Expressing her gratitude for the Trailblazer Award, King adds, "I can't adequately express how excited and grateful I am to the Friends of the Library for the funding to finally make this project a reality."

The program is scheduled to be launched in January 2024. For more details, check the [library website](#) or newsletter (a sign-up box is on the library's main website page) in early January.