

## Senior Library Assistant Colleen Ellis Receives 2024 Eric Lashley Trailblazer Award

In a November 20<sup>th</sup> ceremony attended by library staff and Friends of the Georgetown Public Library board members, Senior Library Assist Colleen Ellis was awarded the Eric Lashley Trailblazer Award. The award honors innovative and creative programs, proposed by a library staff member, that benefit patrons of our library. The award was established in 2021, and named in honor of former GPL director Eric Lashley, who pioneered many innovative programs himself.

The 2024 Trailblazer Award winner, Colleen Ellis, worked with other colleagues on the Outreach Services team to propose that the library provide reading aids to WOW, Home Delivery, and other library patrons who have vision impairments. Their inspiration for this application comes from several patrons who have stopped reading because they can't see even large print well enough to comfortably do so. Colleen says, "These readers always express their sadness at having to stop reading, [so] we would like to try to keep them reading if it's possible. They may be able to read large print or even regular print books if they had a tool to magnify type that is easy and convenient to use. My mom is one of these people, and I hope that the right magnification tool, plus extra light in the same easy-to-use device, will get her back to reading. In the short time since the award was announced, we've already had a new patron who will greatly benefit from one of the reading aids we will be ordering in a few weeks!"

Colleen is no stranger to the library's outreach services program. Her current role is to coordinate the installation and implementation of the locker system at the Carver Center for Families. Before that, she worked on home delivery and was on the Adult Services team.

She feels excited and inspired to receive the Trailblazer Award and receive the encouragement to pursue a new endeavor for patron. She said that even at the award ceremony, "several people told me that they knew of someone in their friends and family circles who have trouble reading, or have given it up entirely, because of vision issues. Some of these folks might benefit from a reading aid, which made me realize that this is a personal issue for lots of people."

Colleen feels that it's a privilege to work in a place where the commitment to serving our community is so strong and dynamic, and is especially fortunate to work on the Outreach Team because they get to bring the library to the community. And she sends a special thanks "to the FOL for sponsoring this award and for supporting the library in so many ways."

