



Pierce County Law Library receives prestigious community engagement award

The Pierce County Law Library was recently awarded the prestigious *Excellence in Community Engagement Award* for its innovative “library within a library” collaboration with the Pierce County Library System.

The award, granted by the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), honors outstanding achievement in community relations activities by AALL members or affiliates. Its intent is to inspire, educate and encourage community engagement.

The 2019 award highlights the Pierce County Law Library’s innovative approach to serving the legal needs of residents in remote areas. The award honors the collaboration of two public libraries sharing resources to establish a satellite law library branch inside the Lakewood Public Library. A satellite branch in Gig Harbor was similarly established the previous year.

“The work of the Pierce County Law Library is to make legal information accessible to all residents, even those living in remote areas of the County. Our partnership with the Pierce County Public Library allowed us to take the law out of the courthouse and to the neighborhoods where people live and work. The success of these branch libraries proves that legal information is a resource everyone needs and should be available without cost,” said Pierce County Law Library Board of Trustees President James H. Bush.

The library collaboration, which began in 2016, has resulted in two satellite branch law libraries coming online at the Gig Harbor Public Library and Lakewood Public Library, two of Pierce County Library’s largest libraries. Nearly 490,000 people visited the two libraries in 2019. The Gig Harbor satellite branch opened June 14, 2018, and the Lakewood satellite followed on May 28, 2019.

The two satellite branches have print and electronic collections that are responsive to the needs of local residents. Law Library surveys of local patrons informed the emphasis on

elder law and probate resources for Gig Harbor, and family law and landlord tenant law at Lakewood.

Branch library services also include regularly scheduled in-person reference assistance. Legal workshops are held at both locations to assist residents with legal issues of interest to those communities.

“The [Pierce County Library] partnership with Pierce County Law Library is another example of good government as we collaborate to make information and resources available to more people,” said Pierce County Library Executive Director Georgia Lomax. “Having [the satellite branches] easily accessible in a public library brings legal resources to more people in a convenient place.”

The award presentation is scheduled for the AALL Annual meeting in July 2020. The nomination was submitted by Barbara Engstrom, executive director of the King County Law Library.

For more information about the Pierce County Law Library and its satellite branch law libraries contact Laurie Miller at Laurie.Miller@piercecountywa.gov.

About the Pierce County Law Library

The Pierce County Law Library is located inside the County-City Building in downtown Tacoma, Washington. Most users of the law library are referred by the co-located Superior, District or Municipal courts. The law library staff of four librarians and technicians welcome about 220 users through the doors daily. Approximately 90% of reference questions come from non-attorneys.