

FROM THE PRESIDENT

JORGE PEREZ

“JOY IS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE” -TOI DERRICOTTE, POET

While preparing for our annual conference this month, I focused on the activity found on the last page of Rebecca Hass’s book 101 Library Seeds for Joy. There is an exercise that encourages journaling about the idea that our personal joy can be an act of resistance. What a profound statement. When things are tough and we feel overwhelmed, opposite to joy, it is human nature to neglect our need for self-kindness. We push ourselves even harder, believing it will lead to greater achievements, but in reality, we only end up robbing ourselves of moments of tenderness, fun and happiness.

As my presidency comes to a close, I reflect on our annual theme, “Overdue for Fun: Celebrating Libraries and Ourselves” and how we need reminding that we should embrace joy wholeheartedly. The theme was initially inspired by the idea that we should take pride in our profession and the work we do, no matter the challenges we face. However, it has since evolved to hold a deeper meaning; we have the power to always reconnect with ourselves and others, restoring our inner strength through moments of

joy in our daily lives. As a result of this practice, we have renewed strength to face anything that comes our way. As library professionals, we are driven by service, generosity, and a deep love for our work and communities. Because of this, it’s essential that we prioritize our own self-care to sustain the energy and passion we give to others.

Something else I realized is that the five call-to-actions under our shared annual theme – 1) revisiting professional foundations, 2) reflecting on your successes, 3) sharing your story, 4) increasing involvement, and 5) mentoring and building relationships – are invitations to embrace joy, regain fulfillment, and cultivate the deep connections we truly need at this time. These activities empower us to go from feelings of helplessness to purpose and community. Embracing joy in these moments doesn’t diminish the seriousness of the issues at hand; rather, it strengthens our resolve to continue moving forward, grounded in positivity and hope.

I am honestly humbled by my presidential experience and working with so many library professional colleagues around the state. It has further strengthened my love for libraries, our profession and our shared purpose. The challenges we have faced and are facing have been small opportunities to continuously practice the delicate balance of recognizing when to exist in uncertainty and when to retreat to protect our hearts. To avoid full disengagement, small practices of joy, sprinkled throughout our day, are needed to continuously reenergize and allow us to keep moving forward. While it’s a practice I haven’t fully mastered yet, we are all doing our best to overcome our personal and external barriers triumphantly.

The most powerful way to combat negativity is to genuinely nourish your soul with joy. Now more than ever, your professional association needs your support and involvement. We must not let a pandemic, political divides, or other challenges weaken our unity in upholding our shared professional values. I cannot wait to join in celebration with all of you at this year’s annual conference!

