

*Speech Delivered by Diana Ditto, Co-president of the Noyes Children's Library Association, at the dedication of the **Jan Jablonski Early Literacy Training Center** at the Noyes Children's Library*

Good morning, my name is Diana Ditto and I am Co-president of the Noyes Children's Library Foundation and I would like to start by telling you a story.

Once upon a time a young mother, looking for an activity to stimulate and encourage her young son, set out to find the Noyes Children's Library. She had heard about this special library that was just for kids and thought it might be an interesting place to visit. They traveled a fair distance to find the little library, passing many other big libraries along the way, but they did not give up or turn back. Upon arrival they were both charmed by the "No Yes" library with the carved owl hanging over the doorway. They thought that the small building looked like it had been plucked out of the pages of a fairy tale and placed on the village green just for them. Inside they found the small space to be welcoming and magical and enjoyed a splendid day reading and playing. They became frequent visitors and enjoyed many happy times in the library. But, this is not the end of the story.

This is the beginning of how Jan Jablonski came to dedicate herself to Noyes Library so that all children could experience the same comfort and happiness at Noyes that her own sons enjoyed. When her own sons became adults, she still loved spending time at Noyes to see the delight on all of the young faces as they discovered this captivating place.

Jan Jablonksi was one of the founding members of the Noyes Children's Library Foundation. Since its inception in 1991, she has served the Foundation in many roles – president, vice president, treasurer, board member, and co-president at the time of her passing– but the part of our work that she loved the most were the moments when she got to create things that directly touched the children. Storybook parades, dance parties, magic shows, Penny Theatre performances – she loved them all and put her special touch on all events. Even when she was fighting ALS and could not physically participate in implementing a program – she got excited with the planning process and she would research and send craft and decorating ideas for every event for the rest of us to implement. She always wanted to make sure that whatever we did was done in the spirit of “Noyes Library.” Her calm demeanor, tenacity, and courage guided our organization and pushed us all to do our best for children.

Jan has had a wide-reaching impact on so many lives in Montgomery County as an educator, advocate for libraries and children, and champion for those with special needs. She was a forward thinker and was committed to the early literacy mission of Noyes Children's Library and shared the vision for the Make MORE Noyes renovation and expansion project to increase program space. She wholeheartedly wanted the library to become inclusive and accessible for all. She was a very humble person; and I do not think she would have ever imagined that some of the expansion space would become the home of the Jan Jablonski Early Literacy Training Center. Those of us who have had the honor of working by her side know that this is a most fitting tribute for a woman who spent her life creating and executing best-practices for early literacy and education. If she were here with us today I am sure that we would

all be witness to her sweet smile - something that she asked that we all remember. I know that all of the members of the Noyes Children's Library Foundation join me in committing ourselves to assisting Montgomery County and Montgomery County Public Libraries in fulfilling programs in Jan's name in any way that we can. Thank you for this well-deserved and wonderful honor for our dear friend and colleague.

*March 11, 2017*

*Kensington, MD*