

CLIA AWARD WINNERS 2021

The CLIA awards are presented annually by Alaska Center for the Book, Alaska's liaison with the U.S. Library of Congress Center for the Book. Since 1993, the awards have been presented to more than 90 people and institutions making a significant contribution in literacy, the literary arts, or the preservation of the written or spoken word.

Nyabony Gat is Health Education Coordinator for Southcentral Alaska Health Education Center. She directs the Peer Leader Navigator program run by the Alaska Literacy Program, training people from Anchorage's immigrant and refugee communities to communicate health information to their peers. Recently, the PLNs have played an important role in communicating COVID-19 vaccine and testing information, overcoming challenges in language, education, and conflicting information.

Elisabeth Jacobson is winner of CLIA's Sue Sherif Literacy Award, named for a longtime Alaska librarian pivotal in efforts to support literacy in Alaska. As a volunteer, Jacobson was crucial in starting a Bethel chapter of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides a free book every month to children under age 5. She did everything from raise funds to register participants to network supporting agencies, and hopes to expand the library to the rest of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the future.

Vered Mares is managing partner for Writer's Block, an independent bookstore in Spenard. Disregarding its infamous roots as a porn shop, in 2018 Mares and her co-owners turned the spot into a bookstore, arts venue, café, and community hub. Writer's Block is a consistent supporter of emerging and established authors, hosting readings, book signings and other events. Despite a major earthquake, pandemic, and an economic downturn, Mares has made Writer's Block a literary center for Anchorage.

The University of Alaska Press was created in 1967 as a nonprofit publisher and distributor of books about Alaska and the circumpolar regions. Books in multiple genres, from Alaska Native culture to natural history, from memoir to poetry, have been published over the decades. In the past five years, UAP has suffered drastic budget cuts and now operates with a bare-bones staff. Despite the lack of

resources, UAP continues to publish critical books for Alaska, including those preserving cultural literacy, new literature, reprints of Alaska classics, literary journals, and more.

The CLIA Award winners will be honored during Alaska Book Week, Oct. 3-9.