**Marketing Champion of the Year**

**Libraries**

Marketing Champion of the Year, entry by: Jane Sellwood, Principle Librarian

Name of Nominee: Jayne Edwards

Job Title: Service Support Assistant

Organisation Name: Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries

Organisation Address: Central Library, High Street

Town: Merthyr Tydfil

Contact Number: 01685 353480

Email: jane.edwards@merthyr.gov.uk

Why are you nominating this person?

Jayne has worked in Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries for 20 years, her base has always been at Treharris Library and she lives in the village with her family.

Jayne left school at 15 to have her eldest son Carl, and leaving at this age meant she did not have the opportunity to gain formal qualifications. She began work at Treharris as a cleaner and later a cleaner attendant, who did some work shelving stock and maintaining how the library looked. It was always clear to those of us that worked with Jayne closely that she was much more capable than she believed herself to be, and she is an amazing library assistant today.

Over the last several years Treharris Library saw a decline in use with both issues and visits dropping as shops and businesses closed in the village. In 2014 the cuts to local authority budgets hit Library services in Merthyr Tydfil and we lost a number of staff, including one of our long serving managers at Treharris Library. However it was not all bad news, as at around the same time as the reductions were being made, we had the good news that Treharris Library was lucky enough to receive a CyMAL grant for refurbishment.

Jayne stepped up immediately with ideas and plans for how services needed to develop in Treharris Library. She was keenly aware that the community needed to find a focal point again with the closure and threats to other key public buildings in the village such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Community Centre. She worked tirelessly during the refurbishment period, drumming up interest in new initiatives, groups and activities to take place after the refurbishment was finished.

She demonstrated a clear understanding of the changing face of Libraries and how the service in Merthyr Tydfil needs to develop, attract new users and ensure that we become a 21st Century Library service.

From April 2014, Jayne has single manned Treharris Library, with very limited support from one of the Operational Managers based at the Library. However, the day to day running and promotion of the Library has fallen solely to Jayne.

Jayne has made it a mission to attract new users and to engage further with current users, especially the younger generations. Her interpersonal skills are excellent and she is very much a ‘what-you-see-is-what-you-get’ character. She has used these skills to form excellent relationships with a variety of people.

She has formed a close working relationship with a local reporter and uses this to ensure that good news stories are covered in the local press as the attached stories from Wales Online demonstrate. In addition to this, smaller items of news, the local Councillor places in his news column for the local press, again a relationship Jayne has nurtured.

One of the new activities that Jayne has organised is an intergenerational computer group. She was aware of a group of older youths who were hanging around the street near the library, not causing trouble but who had been mentioned by some older users as ‘being trouble’. She approached the youths and spoke to them about helping out with a ‘Silver Surfers’ group. This was met with much enthusiasm and the group has met several times. The younger people help some of the older users with using mobile phones, laptops and sending emails.

In Jayne’s words, ‘I just want older people to realise that the kids aren’t all bad, and that the kids realise that older people aren’t just moaning about them all the time. Its about community spirit really isn’t it?’

The increases in activities, visitor figures, issues and computer usage have all happened since Treharris has reduced its staffing by 40% in real terms. Jayne however has taken the bull by the horns and developed the service into not only a Library but a social hub. She has marketed the service to new and existing users and continues to do so.

Jayne works 30 hours per week, which covers the opening hours of the branch. However, Jayne normally does over and above this. The supporting document contains an email sent after Armistice Day when Jayne opened the doors of the Library (on a voluntary basis) on a Sunday morning. The clock attached to the Library is the War Memorial for the Treharris area, and Jayne saw an opportunity to promote the Library and the display made by local residents in the Library, which was reported in the local news and Wales Online. There were many positive comments received on the day and afterward and there were several new members as a result of it. The refreshments were also all provided by Jayne from her own pocket, and after several hours of baking!

Jayne, in the last year, has proved herself an invaluable member of staff, keen to promote not only her own part in the service but in discussions with colleagues helping others to work with groups and individuals, extending this especially to those staff who are working in single manned libraries. Jayne often comes with an idea, seeks the approval to get the go ahead and runs with it. She has a genuine passion for ensuring that the community get behind their local library and turn it into a community hub, somewhere that people feel comfortable in and are welcomed. She cares about bringing different members of the community together and promoting the service as fully as possible.

Her enthusiasm is infectious and has motivated other staff to look at different ways of marketing their own libraries. No doubt the local knowledge that Jayne has helps her to ensure what she does is relevant and welcomed by the community but in the wider picture she has the vision and talent to extend this into other branches and areas. The ownership she has for the service at Treharris is commendable but not limited to there, she cares highly for the service as a whole and is dedicated to its success.