

## PRESS RELEASE

### WRL Director to Retire at End of Year

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Sept. 20, 2023) – Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) Director Betsy Fowler has announced her plans to retire from her role at the end of 2023.

Fowler has worked for public libraries during a career that has spanned four decades, the last six years of which have been at the helm of WRL, a nationally acclaimed regional library system which has recently been named Virginia Library of the Year by the Virginia Library Association.

“I am grateful to be able to finish my library career at such a beloved, vibrant library system,” Fowler said. “It has been a joy to work with the library’s truly dedicated staff and volunteers, a forward-thinking Board of Trustees, supportive local governments, and a remarkable community that clearly values learning and reading.”



*WRL Director Betsy Fowler. High-res image available upon request.*

Under Fowler’s leadership, WRL worked closely with community partners including three local Kiwanis Clubs to create an innovative, groundbreaking new children’s space in the James City County Library that features children’s museum-style educational play elements. Fowler designed this space, called the Kiwanis Kids Idea Studio, which saw over 130,000 visits in the

last year. The Idea Studio has continued to grow since it fully opened to the public in 2021 and will soon see the addition of a new natural landscape playground in the spring.

During Fowler's tenure, WRL's Outreach services have been greatly expanded to include the Cena con Cuentos Spanish-language program, programs at Abram Frink Jr. Community Center, and the purchase of a new Bookmobile. WRL strengthened its partnerships with other institutions like William & Mary, which hosts numerous lecture series at the Library and, since 2019, partners annually with WRL to present a month-long community reading program featuring culturally significant topics.

Under Fowler's leadership, WRL remained open and proactive throughout the pandemic, providing mobile Wi-Fi access to the community, expanding digital collections and implementing self-checkout, curbside pickup, and other service adaptations. She spearheaded the 2020 Census information campaign for the community and worked with library staff to provide manpower for the local Covid vaccine clinic.

"Betsy is a strong, creative leader who has guided the library through very challenging times, including the pandemic, while continuing to work with the city of Williamsburg, James City and York Counties on planning new library facilities," said WRL Board of Trustees Chair Jean Stettler.

"In addition, Betsy and the library staff have re-imagined spaces and services which have truly enhanced library experience for the people of this community. The Board of Trustees will miss her greatly but wish her the best and much enjoyment in retirement."

Among other recognitions of her work in the field, Fowler was named one of the Top 50 Women Leaders of Virginia, has been the Virginia Library Staff Person of the Year, received the Virginia Library Public Relations Award, the Chesapeake City Manager's Award, and a Congressional Earmark for a Workforce Development Initiative to serve the Hampton Roads region. In 2012, she was selected by the U.S. Department of State as a professional emissary to work with Greek libraries.

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*The Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) is an award-winning regional library system that consists of the Williamsburg Library on Scotland St. in Williamsburg, the James City County Library on Croaker Rd. in James City County, the Stryker Center on N. Boundary St. in Williamsburg, and its Mobile Library Services vehicles. The WRL service area includes the City of Williamsburg, James City County, and York County.*

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