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SCL EDUCATOR EARNS FRED ROGERS SCHOLARSHIP

SHARPSBURG, PA – Sharpsburg Community Library (SCL) Education and Engagement Coordinator Alison K. Babusci is the 2025-26 recipient of the Fred Rogers Institute's Red Cardigan Scholarship.

The institute was founded through Saint Vincent College in honor of the late Fred Rogers, a Pittsburgh legend, global icon and beloved host of the former television program *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. As part of its initiatives, the institute hosts an annual Educators' Neighborhood cohort; which is described as "a community of educators who learn together, inspired from the life and work of Fred Rogers."

Individuals from around the world are selected for to participate in the yearlong program; hosted mostly virtually; and "consider how to deepen their application of Fred Rogers' work and theory to their work with children," according to the institute's website. The Red Cardigan Scholarship is available to one educator who serves in a community setting; such as a library, museum or out-of-school learning program; and allows for Babusci's participation in the cohort.

Babusci, who heard of the program several years ago but didn't apply until earlier this year, said she was excited to learn of her acceptance.

"Although I've spent over a decade as a full-time, public-school teacher and another decade as a university professor, the library is my favorite teaching setting," she said. "I was a library kid and am so proud of the work I do at SCL."

According to the institute's website, Educators' Neighborhood's many benefits include: community with other educators; deep learning from Fred Rogers' legacy; intention-setting and practical application; encouragement and appreciation; and much more.

"These days, libraries are so much more than a place to find a book or a computer. We are vibrant communities of folks with varied inquiries and needs. Being an educator in a library setting demands relationship-building and, sometimes, a bit of social work," Babusci said. "I believe our community classes are an excellent place to examine Fred Rogers' fundamentals of learning and growing."

Those fundamentals include: a sense of self-worth; a sense of trust; curiosity; the capacity to look and listen carefully; the capacity to play; and times of solitude. Babusci said she will use those principles as a "framework" for all her work and classes.

"All humans need these things. I incorporate art into all of my teaching because I believe artmaking is a brain-builder and a healing modality," she said. "I believe the arts work in harmony with the ideas of curiosity and looking and listening and play; and I am excited to entwine these ideas in my work and strengthen my skills."

A Pittsburgh native, artist, teacher, professional storyteller and arts education consultant, Babusci has over 30 years of teaching experience in public, private and charter school settings, as well as museums and universities. Her art involves a variety of media, usually including textiles, stories and a lot of color.

Babusci also teaches for Union Project and can be seen driving their Wheel Mobile around the city. She maintains a repertoire of stories and folktales drawn from diverse cultures. Her critically acclaimed, one-woman show, *Deconstructing Barbie*, premiered in 1999 at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Arts Festival and went on to tour nationally.

She has performed for all ages in museums, independent bookstores, schools, libraries, theatres and festivals – often accompanied by her original puppets. A certified Early Childhood, Art, K-12 and yoga teacher, Babusci earned her master's degree in educational leadership in the arts from Bank Street College of Education and Parsons School of Design in New York City.

In her current role, she teaches and creates engaging programming for all ages. SCL Branch Manager Sara Mariacher said Babusci embodies Fred Rogers' six fundamentals of learning in all she does.

"Alison not only has these necessities in herself, but she continually imparts them to all of the participants in her library programs every day. She is a beloved presence in our library neighborhood who inspires creativity and joy, building meaningful connections with her program participants," Mariacher said.

"Through her participation in this yearlong program, Alison will connect to educators all over the world who are espousing the ideals of Fred Rogers in their work, building a neighborhood that can support her vital work with the children in our community."

As for what's ahead, Babusci plans to embrace the Educators' Neighborhood experience – and wear a red cardigan in Rogers' honor.

"I hope this work gives me a renewed purpose and reinvigorates my work at the library and my lifelong passion for teaching," she said.

To learn more about the Fred Rogers Institute, located in Rogers' hometown of Latrobe, Penn., or the Educators' Neighborhood Initiative, visit www.fredrogersinstitute.org. To learn more about Babusci's work and life, visit www.alisonb.com.

For more information about Sharpsburg Community Library, including upcoming programming, visit www.coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org/sharpsburg/.

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For media inquiries, contact Communications & Marketing Specialist Kaylie Glaze at 412-828-9520, ext. 5012, or glazek@coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org. Sharpsburg Community Library, a branch of Cooper-Siegel Community Library, serves all Fox Chapel School District communities.