

Message from the President

2011: A Year of Accomplishments
TURNING THE PAGES TOWARD OUR FUTURE



When I accepted the position as board president in 2011, I promised that I would serve with integrity. I dedicated myself to fulfill that promise by attending every BPL board and committee meeting, and every City Council Education and Budget Committee meeting. I thank the Board for entrusting me with the responsibility to lead the board during a challenging year of budget cuts, restructuring and natural disaster.

When 25 employees accepted the 2010 Volunteer Retirement Incentive Plan, the board had to restructure the library system's organization chart to fill those empty spots. We hated to lose those dedicated employees, but still worked to give our patrons 100 percent. When an April 27 tornado destroyed homes, businesses, lives and the Pratt City Library, our system found ways to help those in need. Our state, city and system are still on the mend from the April storms, and I know that brighter days are ahead.

Our system wouldn't be where it is today without the hard work of our library employees, city leaders, and community stakeholders. I thank them for their continued support as we strive to provide the highest quality library service to our citizens for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and enjoyment.

As we kick off a new year, I want to challenge you that you make it the best year yet. If there is something you see within our system that needs attention, let me or a fellow board member know. We are only as strong as our weakest link and I want us to be bold and tight as we enter 2012. It is with great joy that I welcome trustees Georgia Morgan Blair, Dora U. Sims and Dr. Monique Gardner-Witherspoon. They were each appointed to five-year terms, which will end on December 31, 2016. In 2011, two committed board members stepped down from service. The Honorable Shanta' Craig Owens moved out of the Birmingham city limits and the Reverend Anthony A. Johnson accepted an appointment to another board. Both served the board well, and they will continue to support BPL's mission. I thank them for their service.

Last year, I stood before you with challenges for 2011 in mind. Back then, I welcomed them with open arms. I'm happy to report that as the system got to work we are seeing positive change. On January 27, 2011 the board approved the 2011-2016 Birmingham Public Library Strategic Plan, which looked at ways to make BPL even better. I am honored to report that the board has completed 60% of the recommendations for Board Development.

Make no mistake. 60 percent is good and we are moving forward to bring up the rear with accomplishing the remaining 40 percent this year.

In an effort to improve various policies, the board approved several issues addressing public relations, grievance and hiring procedures, probationary periods, relocating and reassigning the Pratt City library staff after the April tornadoes and more.

I'm also happy to announce that we are in the process of securing a new BPL logo. Six Branding & Design, a young professional group of dedicated graphic designers who love the city of Birmingham, offered to design a logo, pro bono. Recently, they presented the proposed logo to the board and we are in the stages of review. In addition, Dora Sims and I were elected to the 2011-2012 ALTAFF Board of Directors as Trustees at Large.

2011 is also when BPL was in the national limelight because one of our own, Sandra Ross-Forrest, a librarian at North Avondale Library, received the "I Love My Librarian Award" in New York City. She was the only Alabama librarian selected from a group of 1,700 applications in the national competition.

These are just a few highlights, and I'm excited and optimistic about seeing this board soar in 2012.

Gwendolyn B. Guster Welch, President