

## WHAT is PA FORWARD?

The Pennsylvania Library Association's (PaLA) 21st Century Literacies Initiative, PA Forward, was conceived to give voice to what the library community already knows, and what other states throughout the nation are also recognizing:

*With the right support, libraries are ideally positioned to become the community centers of information, technology, and learning that will fuel educational and economic opportunity for all of our citizens.*

Libraries have moved far beyond just being book repositories. They're agile institutions serving real-life needs. Libraries can be key to powering progress and elevating the quality of life in PA by fueling the types of knowledge essential to success: Basic Literacy, Information Literacy, Civic and Social Literacy, Health Literacy, and Financial Literacy.

PA Forward encourages all Pennsylvania libraries to use cohesive branding and marketing tools to frame communications to key stakeholders – elected officials, community leaders, donors, patrons, board, Friends, and employees. Libraries use PA Forward's five literacies as a guiding framework for setting service priorities, identifying potential community and funding partners, structuring strategic plans, and building well-rounded, multi-skilled boards.

The Green Free Library participated in the PALS PA Forward Pilot Project. The Pilot Project was created by the PALS 2015 Branding Team. What is PALS? The PaLA Academy of Leadership Studies (PALS) is a cooperative initiative between PaLA and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries to offer leadership development for librarians.

The Pilot Project was launched by the North Central Library District and the Pennsylvania Academy of Leadership Studies Branding Team as part of the Pennsylvania Library Association's 21st Century Literacies Initiative, PA Forward. This statewide initiative places the spotlight on Pennsylvania libraries and the important role our libraries have in the lives of citizens.

From February to May, these libraries raised awareness of their programs and offerings that help Pennsylvania citizens improve their command of five types of literacy – basic, information, civic and social, health, and financial. These literacies are essential to greater success in all vital roles of life: as students, as parents, as employees, as consumers, as citizens.

The Pilot Project required libraries to “brand” their programs and communications and to talk with their communities about how libraries across the Commonwealth are moving PA Forward. There were several steps to becoming a PA Forward Library requiring libraries to submit documentation of their efforts to communicate about PA Forward in one strong voice.

As of May 10, the Green Free Library has reached the Bronze Level and Two Silver Stars towards the Silver Level. The staff’s goal is to reach the Gold Level by June 30, 2016.

Leslie A. Wishard, library director, will be discussing the participation of the county public libraries in the Pilot Project with the Tioga County Commissioners as their June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.



*Information provided by [www.pafoward.org](http://www.pafoward.org) and June Houghtaling, district consultant for the North Central Library District.*