Mrs. Tina Nolen Named 2017 Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award Recipient

MONTEVALLO, Ala. -

The David Mathews Center for Civic Life would like to announce that Mrs. Tina Nolen was awarded the David Mathews Center for Civic Life's 2017 Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award at the Mathews Center's 11th Anniversary Civic Institute Luncheon on Friday, August 18, 2017, at the American Village in Montevallo.

The Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award annually recognizes an Alabama community leader who has empowered others in the spirit of Jean O'Connor-Snyder. Jean O'Connor-Snyder served as a mentor for the Capstone Men and Women of the University of Alabama during the 1970s; her commitment to community, service, and excellence deeply impacted the young men and women she mentored. The Mathews Center honors her life and legacy through a statewide undergraduate internship program and through the annual Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award. Recipients of the Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award must demonstrate a record of serving their communities while encouraging and empowering others to be active, engaged members of society. Award winners are epitomized by their unique ability to uncover the potential in others. Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award recipients demonstrate a commitment to finding the worth in everyone and empowering others to use their talents to improve their communities.

Mrs. Tina Nolen is the librarian for Ashland City Public Library in Ashland, Alabama located in Clay County. Mrs. Nolen received her training from the University of Alabama and has served as librarian for Ashland City Public Library for over 20 years. She credits Virginia Mathews, who was instrumental in creating Ashland's Head Start program, as being one of her greatest mentors and inspiring her to consider how the library can act as a resource to the local community. Early in her career Mrs. Nolen successfully applied for a literacy grant through the Library of Congress which allowed her to expand the impact of the library in the surrounding rural community. In 2001, under Mrs. Nolen's leadership, the Ashland Public Library was awarded the Alabama Public Library System's first state construction grant. In 2014, Mrs. Nolen was awarded the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment's "Advocate of the Year" award.

Mrs. Nolen acted as a convener for the David Mathews Center's "Minding Our Future" forum series in 2015. After the forum, through convening and collaborating with the Children's Policy Council, Alabama Cooperative Extension agents, and a number of Ashland community members, she contributed to the development of a mentoring program that offered a safe space for adolescents, in addition to providing relationship counseling and life skills classes.

Inspired by the Reach Out and Read program from the American Pediatric Association and the Babies Need Words initiative from the American Library Association, Mrs. Nolen began to advocate locally for programs that promote early language skills acquisition for babies and toddler in her community. She successfully applied for a grant to improve local awareness of developing language skills in early childhood

successfully applied for a grant to improve local awareness of developing language skills in early childhood and provide information for parents and guardians on how to improve their child's language development. In addition to creating enriching educational programs, as city librarian, Mrs. Nolen acts as an essential facilitator and contact for community services, ranging from genealogical research to GED classes and violence prevention resources.

"Mrs. Tina Nolen embodies the spirit of the Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award," says Cristin Brawner, the Mathews Center's Executive Director. "We admire Mrs. Nolen's love for her community, and the incredible impact she makes every day as director of the Ashland Public Library. I cannot think of a more deserving recipient of this year's Jean O'Connor-Snyder Award."