

A Circle of Care and Support: Eisenhower Public Library and Triton College Partnership

The Eisenhower Public Library in Harwood Heights is committed to equity, offering programs for all ages, online learning opportunities and even its own Social Services team.

“We are always looking for ways to remove as many barriers to service as possible, and language barriers are often the most difficult to remove or at least make permeable,” said Library Director Stacy Wittmann.

When Wittmann learned that Triton College offered staff language training programs through its division of Corporate Partnerships and Academic Outreach, an on-site Polish-language program benefitted both library visitors and employees.

“This training gave staff members the confidence to meet patrons who speak Polish where they are, which puts them at ease and offers them the sense that we will do our very best to help them find the information they need,” said Wittmann.

For staff, Wittmann described the training as “a morale booster” with a “robust and engaging” curriculum. “Staff got very excited about it and would discuss what they learned with each other outside the classroom,” said Wittmann.

An added advantage, Wittman noted, was that the program “offered staff the opportunity to pursue a learning goal while on the clock and without leaving the library. I would love to try to work future Triton training programs into our budget in the future.”

Wittmann first learned about the language programming during a meeting with [Triton College Library](#) Chairperson Shekinah Lawrence, who discussed what Triton, as an academic library, provides to local public libraries like Eisenhower.

“Because we serve the same patrons, it just makes sense that we partner together so that our patrons can see us as a united front to give resources and information,” Lawrence said, describing this relationship as “a complete circle of care and support.”

A self-paced language learning lab that is open during Triton’s regular library hours and a translator device with more than 150 languages are two of the ways Triton ensures equity for its multilingual patrons and those who would like to practice language skills.

Lawrence described the translator device as a more complete way to serve patrons compared with free online translator devices, “but it’s also something that our other public library partners are using.”

“A patron can see that libraries are using similar tools to be able to meet them where they are,” said Lawrence.

To learn more about corporate training options for businesses or organizations, contact Laura Fisher, Triton's Director of Corporate Partnerships and Academic Outreach, at **708-456-0300 Ext. 3768** or laurafisher@triton.edu.