

Be That Person

Channeling New Strengths for Everyday Advocacy Success

JENNA NEMEC-LOISE

Everyday Advocacy empowers ALSC members to embrace their roles as library advocates by focusing on their daily efforts to serve youth and families. Each lighthearted column features easy-to-implement strategies and techniques for asserting the transformative power of libraries both within communities and beyond them. Please contact the ALSC Advocacy and Legislation Committee with comments and ideas for future topics.

We all know That Person, right?

He's the neighbor who can't wait to tell you about his latest trip to [insert exotic destination here]. Just wait 'til you see all three hundred of his photos!

She's the mother who talks about her kids—at work, in the grocery store, on the bus—to anyone who'll listen. Did you know her son just won [insert award name here], and her daughter was just accepted to [insert school name here]?

Let me guess your reaction to these encounters:

Response A: "Wow! I wish I could be more like That Person."



Michael Schulte, President of the Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children Board of Directors and Gail Conway, CEO of Opening Minds USA (right), present Jenna Nemeć-Loise (center) with the 2014 Opening Minds Innovation Award. Nemeć-Loise accepted the award for Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library®, 2nd edition, on behalf of ALSC and PLA.

(Translation: She's so outgoing! I'd love to talk that openly with people, especially those I don't know very well.)

Response B: "Wow. I hope I don't sound like That Person!" (Translation: OMG, he's always bragging! I'd never want to bore people by talking about myself like that.)

Well, it's truth time, folks. Whether yours is response A or response B, children, libraries, and your ALSC colleagues need you to be That Person. Everyday Advocacy depends on it.

Response C: "Umm . . . what?" (Translation: Jenna's finally lost it, y'all.)

Channeling That Person

When you think about it, channeling That Person is actually a pretty smart move for Everyday Advocates like us. Consider That Person's strengths:

1. He talks about himself and how awesome he is;



Jenna Nemeć-Loise is a relationship architect, community builder, teen advocate, and early childhood specialist living in Chicago. She is Member Content Editor of the ALSC Everyday Advocacy website and eNewsletter and a current member of the ALSC Advocacy and Legislation Committee. Contact Jenna at everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com and find her on Twitter (@ALAJenna).

2. She's highly knowledgeable and passionate about her topic;
3. He's determined to get his message out there, refusing to take "No!" for an answer; and
4. She's always seeking out newer, wider audiences to target with her latest and greatest news.

Man, it's almost like That Person visited the ALSC Everyday Advocacy website to plan effective strategies for success! I challenge you to follow his or her lead in these short weeks before the 2014 Annual Conference. Come to Vegas loud and proud with an Everyday Advocacy story to share!

Here's how That Person does it—and how you can do it, too:

Make Everyday Advocacy your top priority. ALSC peeps, I say this with love: No. More. Excuses. Accept the fact that Everyday Advocacy is everyone's job, including yours. It's the most important thing you can do for libraries, librarians, and the children and families you serve. If you don't do it, who will? (That'd be no one in case you're wondering.)

Get comfortable talking yourself up. Shake off the notion that talking about yourself and what you do constitutes bragging. I assure you, it's anything but. Think of your audience as library-curious, genuinely interested in the where, when, how, who, and why of your efforts. You won't be an insufferable bore. You'll be an Everyday Advocate.

Write an elevator speech and get ready to use it. Have a clear, focused message ready to go for whenever opportunity strikes. Collaborate with your colleagues to write that elevator speech, and then practice it until you've got it down. You'll never know when it might come in handy. (Chances are high it won't even be in an elevator.)

Go where the library isn't. As children's librarians, we're always talking to each other about how great we are. But what about the oodles of people outside the library world who don't know about our collective awesomeness? Get out there

Are You Taking Part in Take Action Tuesday?

Back in February, the ALSC Advocacy & Legislation Committee launched **Take Action Tuesday**, a weekly day of engagement to help ALSC members learn, share, and make a difference for libraries and library services to children in their communities.

Since then, the committee has challenged you and your ALSC colleagues to take simple yet effective action together every Tuesday. Here are just a few examples of previous weekly challenges:

- Spend fifteen minutes talking with your supervisor about your role as an Everyday Advocate.
- Identify one new stakeholder in your library community, and make the call!
- Learn more about how you can invest in Virtual Library Legislative Day (VLLD) 2014.

And now inquiring minds want to know: Are you taking part in Take Action Tuesday?

If you are, we'd love to hear stories of your Take Action Tuesday hits and misses. (We may even feature them in an upcoming issue of the *Everyday Advocacy Matters* eNewsletter.)

If you're not, we want to hear about that, too. What are the barriers to your participation, and what can we do to make Take Action Tuesday a part of your weekly routine? (Remember, you're not alone on your advocacy journey. The Advocacy & Legislation Committee can help!)

All feedback is welcome. E-mail Jenna Nemec-Loise at everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com or complete the Share Your Advocacy Story webform (www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/share-your-advocacy-story) on the Everyday Advocacy website.

and find them. Find out how you can attend a meeting, speak at a non-library conference, or host a table at an organizational fair.

That Person as Everyday Advocate

Lest you think I don't practice what I preach, I channeled That Person back in January at the Opening Minds Conference in Chicago. For two advocacy-filled days, I represented ALSC and PLA by hosting a table to promote Every Child Ready to Read @ your library second edition (ECRR2), a finalist for the 2014 Opening Minds Innovation Award.

Exciting doesn't even begin to describe it. Not only was ECRR2 up for an award, but I also had the chance to talk with early childhood educators, caregivers, program administrators, business owners, and fundraisers about the critical role of libraries in early learning. My elevator speech about ECRR2 got quite the workout!

The results? Nothing short of epic. With the early education community and a few ALSC colleagues cheering me on, I accepted the 2014 Opening Minds Innovation Award on behalf of ALSC, PLA, and children's librarians everywhere. But here's the best news of all: Everyday Advocacy got ECRR2 recognized as a game-changer for children and families in the world of early childhood education, and that's just amazing.

Of course, you don't have to be an award contender to be an Everyday Advocate. By channeling That Person's strengths, you can be passionate, knowledgeable, determined, and always on the lookout for new audiences to target with your advocacy message. Remember, the ALSC Everyday Advocacy website is always there for you every step of the way.

Need a little practice? Find me in Vegas. I'll be That Person in the room, talking to anyone who'll listen about [insert Everyday Advocacy success story here]. ☺