

JUDITH AUTH



Riverside is fortunate to have a number of organizations that have actively contributed to its reputation as the Center of Arts and Culture in the Inland Region. One of the most vital of these is the Riverside Public Library. The person who is most responsible for the Library's involvement is its longtime Director, Judith Auth. Playwright. Costume Designer. Author. Storyteller. Arts Administrator. Promoter. Advocate. These are all roles Judith has played in the world of arts and culture. And they are elements of herself that she brought to her career with the Library. As a children's librarian searching for a way to spark curiosity in youth and provide tools for discovery, Judith called upon her experience as an artist. For the Bi-Centennial in 1976, Judith wrote "Americans All" ...American folktales performed as a one-act play. Along with her husband, storyteller Phil Auth, and son, Michael, Judith took the show to every City and County library in the system. In an effort to provide an extension of the library experience, she developed free community workshops featuring poetry and reader's theatre. By combining her passion for the arts with her passion for the library, Judith was able to find visionary ways to expose children and adults to both. From 1973 to 1993, Judith served as Secretary to the Nosotros Fine Arts Workshop and Gallery. This groundbreaking, alternative arts center was dedicated to providing tools for art exploration to children, teens and adults. It was here that Judith

learned the grantwriting and political interfacing skills that would become so valuable to her in the future. Judith credits Leer Larkins, artist and founder of Nosotros, with opening up for her a sense of possibility. It is this sense of possibility that has enabled her to pursue and realize her vision of what the Riverside Public Library could be. When faced with hurdles, such as drastically reduced funding, Judith prevailed due to her ability to imagine what was possible. Along with Michael Reagan, then President of the Board of Library Trustees, Judith envisioned a connection to the library through cyberspace and won recognition for an innovative approach to introducing low-income youth to computers. She helped to form the Library Foundation. And she helped to create the Casa Blanca Library and Family Learning Center, increasing the use of that facility ten-fold. Judith has surrounded herself with an excellent staff, such as Helene Luley, Catherine Morton and Sue Struthers, whom she encourages to think outside-the-box. As a result, the Riverside Public Library continues to host outstanding author events, World Music performances, a Foreign Film series, workshops, and many more free community activities. The Library is also an active member of the Riverside Cultural Consortium, a popular participant in First Sundays, as well as Arts Walk on First Thursdays. The Library was also the site of the opening and closing ceremonies for Fanning the Creative Flame, the Consortium's ten-day celebration of arts, culture and heritage. January marks Judith's last month as Director of the Riverside Public Library. After 34 years, she will be retiring. But Judith is far from through creating. She intends to gather the history of Nosotros so that others can witness its place in the history of art and culture in this City. She also plans on continuing her work preserving the history of Evergreen Cemetery, begun with the photographic essay, Gates of Mourning, as well as the Walking Tour she authored. When asked what she would like to be remembered for, Judith replied, "As someone who made the library the destination of choice for curious people."