



Keynote Session:

“The 7 Circles of Community Immersion”

Gene Coppola, Director of Palm Harbor Library, retired

After graduating with an MLS from St. John's University in NY, Gene began his library career with the Brooklyn Public Library. Over a six year period he worked at nine different branches, exposing him to a multitude of cultures throughout the borough. In 1990, Gene and his family moved to Florida where he started a 10 year stint with the Pasco County Library System. He began as the Branch Manager for the new Regency Park Branch Library and ended as the division manager for all east-side Pasco libraries. Gene was then hired as Director of Palm Harbor Library in June 2000.



In 23 years at Palm Harbor, Gene led the library through eras of technological changes, budget restrictions, staff turnovers, the Covid outbreak, and political challenges. The library emerged as a cultural destination, an innovative hub, a staff-centered workplace and a mecca for volunteerism while establishing itself as a player at the community table. Gene was recognized for his efforts by the Palm Harbor Chamber of Commerce, receiving awards for Citizen of the Year as well as Lifetime Achievement.

Gene was also involved in state-wide librarianship through his Presidency of the Florida Library Association, the Tampa Bay Library Consortium and Friends of the State Library and Archives. He recently received FLA's "Lifetime Achievement" award.

After nearly 40 years of public service, Gene is very proud to call himself...a librarian.