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Male-Riordan to helm Bristol library

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By Marin Howell

BRISTOL — Collaboration has been a key part of Katie Male-Riordan's work as director of the New Haven Community Library. Throughout the past two and a half years she's spent leading the literacy hub, Male-Riordan has worked with various organizations in town to create programming for New Haven residents of all ages.

It seems fitting, then, that collaboration is what Male-Riordan is most looking forward to as she pursues her next endeavor. Later this month, Male-Riordan will step down from her post in New Haven to take over as the new director of the Lawrence Memorial Library in Bristol.

"What really drew me to applying for the Lawrence position was the opportunity to collaborate with other staff members. With some of my previous directorships that I've undertaken, it's been with smaller staffs or led by myself. This was an opportunity to get to collaborate with and work with a great team," Male-Riordan said.

Male-Riordan, 33, has spent the better part of the past decade working within the walls of libraries in Vermont and New York. Prior to relocating to Addison County in 2020, Male-Riordan served as the library manager of the Hay Memorial Library in Sackets Harbor, N.Y.



KATIE MALE-RIORDAN this month will leave her post as director of the New Haven Community Library to begin leading another literacy hub in the 5-town area — Bristol's Lawrence Memorial Library.

Photo courtesy of Katie Male-Riordan

Her responsibilities at the literacy hub included coordinating year-round programming for adult and youth services and maintaining the library collection.

Upon moving to Vermont, Male-Riordan took on a similar position as director of the New Haven Community Library. She began leading the library in May of 2021, at a time when the organization and many others were still navigating social distancing protocol and other pandemic-related restrictions.

“The last job that I left (in New York), I had dealt a lot with having to close the facility down and work within different levels of reopening the building and ensuring the safety of staff and patrons,” Male-Riordan recalled. “I really felt ready to help them through that path of opening up the building while keeping staff safe and patrons safe and being flexible and inventive with the types of programs that we’d be able to offer during that very fluid time.”

As COVID protocols were lifted, Male-Riordan’s focus at the New Haven library shifted toward expanding programming for patrons. She worked with organizations like the Town Events Committee and New Haven Neighbors to explore ways to contribute to ongoing events and organize new activities in town, such as a series of events in the fall of 2022 aimed at listening to and celebrating the local migrant community.

In the past year, Male-Riordan has also worked to develop new programs at the library, such as a cookbook book club and a crochet workshop for youth. Those efforts have seemingly paid off, as the library’s programming numbers jumped from just over 300 participants in 2022 to more than 800 participants throughout 2023.

“I’ve really worked on growing that (programming) part, and hopefully people are starting to see the library as a place to come and gather, meet their neighbors and also learn new skills or find enjoyment through shared interests,” Male-Riordan said.

Looking back on her time at the New Haven Community Library, Male-Riordan said she’s enjoyed getting to know the organization’s patrons.

“The thing that I love most about working in small community libraries is getting to know the community; it truly is the best part,” Male-Riordan said. “So much of my conversations with the community help inform my work greatly, from what I’m buying for the collection, to what services we might plan to offer, to what programs I might plan for the community. I really appreciate those conversations that I have at the front circulation desk and the ways that we can build relationships together and help build a better community.”

Male-Riordan is looking forward to getting to know another part of the 5-town community later this month, when she takes over the reins of the Lawrence Memorial Library.

The Bristol library began its search for a new fulltime director this past fall, following the departure of former director Coco Moseley, who in October was hired as executive director of Middlebury’s Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History.

“I can’t wait to get in there and listen and hear more about what peoples’ interests are, what the community looks like, what the culture of Bristol itself feels like so that can inform the work that we’ll be doing at Bristol,” Male-Riordan said of her new position.

Lawrence Memorial Library officials are happy to welcome Male-Riordan to the organization.

“We are all excited to have Katie as our new library director and look forward to working with her,” Lawrence Memorial Library Board of Trustees Treasurer Betsy Almeter told the *Independent*.

Male-Riordan will start training at the Lawrence on Jan. 8 and officially begin leading the organization on Jan. 22. She noted that her first couple months on the job will be spent listening and learning about the inner workings of the Bristol library, though she’s excited to eventually explore ways to expand the library’s programming.

“I know that when Coco left, there had been a flourish of programming and offerings for the community,” Male-Riordan said. “I really look forward to picking up that torch and carrying it on and seeing what opportunities we can bring forth for the community.”

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