



## **Message to the Community about the Passing of Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Director John Spears**

**Buffalo, N.Y., July 21, 2025** - It is with great sadness that the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System announces the passing of Library Director John Spears following a courageous battle with cancer. John died on Sunday, July 20, 2025 at the age of 51.

John Spears was appointed Library Director in Buffalo in April 2022 following a national search. He brought with him more than 25 years of library management experience having worked in libraries in Colorado, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah.

John Spears will best be remembered for his leadership in advocating to protect intellectual freedoms. He was known for taking a prominent stance in encouraging funding for libraries to continue to provide free, equal, and equitable access to information for everyone.

For the Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries, John is also credited with taking immediate actions in early 2023 to ensure public safety at the downtown Central Library when the difficult decision was made to close temporarily in the wake of safety concerns caused by an influx of teenagers each afternoon.

In 2024, Director Spears was honored by the New York Library Association (NYLA) for innovative leadership in fostering relationships with all sectors of the community and libraries. He was also an active member, advocating for library funding and resources, through speaking engagements and published articles for the Western New York Library Resources Council (WNYLRC), New York Library Association (NYLA), American Library Association (ALA), Library Leadership and

Management Association, the International Federation of Library Associations, and *Public Libraries Magazine*.

John leaves behind his partner, Brian Dimit, his father, brother, and sister, and many friends in the library, Elmwood neighborhood and the Buffalo Quaker communities.

A public *Celebration of Life* will be held at a later date.

Donations in honor of John Spears can be made to the Library System's *Freedom to Read* campaign at: <https://bl.buffalolib.org/SpearsMemorial>

Interim Director Dorinda Darden will continue to manage daily operations of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System until further notice.

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