

Gift will help boy connect to world

CHRISTMAS is still four days away, but it came a bit early for 10-year-old Robert Evans of Swanzev.

He was recently presented with a check for \$2,300, but it wasn't for a new bike or the latest version of Wii.

It's to see.

We're not talking about the vision we know. Robert is blind and has been from birth. He was



JIM FENNEL
Just Checking In

A loved librarian gets her due

◆ **A national winner:** Colleagues at Antioch University New England couldn't say enough good things about their reference librarian Jean **Amaral**.

By **MELANIE PLEND**
Special to the Sunday News

KEENE — Every day, Jean Amaral travels the world, helps solve environmental genocide, protects oceans and changes the planet. If you ask **Amaral**, though, it's just your typical day at the library.

As a reference librarian for the environmental studies and psychology departments at Antioch University New England, **Amaral**, 44, gets in on the ground floor of cutting-edge research projects, serving as a guide for faculty and students through the vast and sometimes stymieing world of Internet research. And, according to her colleagues, she approaches each project and request with the

warmth, enthusiasm and joy of a child making a new discovery.

It's her standout research skills, attitude and attention to her students that recently earned her a spot among the top librarians in the country in the "I Love My Librarian" contest sponsored by the New York Times, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the American Library Association. Nominated by Antioch's environmental studies Professor Steve Chase, Amaral's name was one of 3,200 submitted from across the country and one of 10 to win the coveted honor.

"She is our institution's academic technology leader, a boundless source of bright and good energy, shepherd of change, full of helpful ideas and fresh perspectives, optimism and plain good sense," wrote library supervisor Marcy Levesee in the nomination letter for **Amaral**. "No research need is too small, no institution-level task too gnarly (one

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Jean **Amaral**, reference librarian for the environmental studies and psychology departments at Antioch University New England, recently earned a spot among the top librarians in the country in the "I Love My Librarian" contest sponsored by the New York Times, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the American Library Association.

COURTESY PHOTIC

Top librarian a boundless source of knowledge and energy

Librarian

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of her favorite terms) for her to embrace. Jean believes in leading from the middle, and I count myself lucky to be on her team."

Leversee added that Amaral's fresh-baked cookies and free-trade coffee, which she keeps handy for all who'd like them, don't hurt either.

But Amaral's path to the library wasn't a clear one. She

grew up in the Boston area and from there made her way around New England and eventually to the West Coast.

She started out as a college professor, but after about nine years, she said, she burned out.

"Teaching is such a difficult and rewarding profession," she said. "It's a challenge to stay fresh. Plus I was realizing I had a lot of different interests, like the environment, and wanted to try working in that and doing other things."

So, Amaral did just that, becoming a baker, back-country ranger and an administrator for a few non-profits, including one that trained helper-monkeys for use with the disabled, among other things.

"After a while I realized I was wandering too much," she said. "I missed higher education and life-long learning. I missed being in an environment where people were excited about knowledge."

So in 2003, she decided to go back to school to become a librarian. "I've always loved libraries," she said. "I realized that was exactly the environment I had been missing and looking for. Libraries are vibrant and dynamic. Libraries open up whole new worlds to people. And it just was for me. Libraries just rock."

In 2006, she graduated and applied at Antioch as a reference librarian.

"The first thing I noticed from the minute I walked in, everybody smiled and said hello," she said. "And they all had this great welcoming and positive attitude. I got the feeling they were all there working toward the same goal: making the community a better place for folks. And I just knew I wanted to be there."

And the Antioch staff was just as enamored with her.

"She has exceeded the school's highest expectations for her job performance," said Professor Chase, who was part of the committee to hire her.

"She is a dynamo of energy, talent, humor and consideration, and has the most intense dedi-

cation to aiding students and faculty that I have ever seen."

Basically, her job is to help faculty and staff keep up and learn the latest research technology. She also helps with research among a long list of other duties. But her job has become so much more than that, Leversee said.

"She has a gift for making her students see themselves and their work as boundlessly interesting," Leversee said in Amaral's nomination letter. "I asked her to tell me something that happened today that she felt really good about and she said that a student stopped by her post out in the library to say, 'you make every one of us feel so special.' And the magic is that all her students feel that way."

Chase went on to echo that point. He described how over the summer, students were asked to review the environ-

mental studies doctoral program. But it was Amaral that students wanted to talk about.

"The student reps all shared with the faculty the doctoral students' unanimous agreement that 'Jean Amaral is worth the price our tuition dollars all by herself,'" Chase wrote.

But if you ask Amaral, it's the students who are cause for accolades. When she describes the research projects her students and colleagues are working on, her voice lights up with excitement and her already rapid-speech goes to warp speed.

"I've noticed a pattern and a trend in my life, of being drawn to places where I knew people were making a difference," she said. "And they are doing that here. They are doing these amazing things. ... They are the ones winning victories for humanity, making our world a better place, a just place."

OPEN Christmas Eve & New Year's Eve

Breakfast Specials: 7am-11am

Monte Cristo w/ homefries & coffee	\$8.95
Crepes w/ fresh fruit & coffee	\$7.95
Stuffed French Toast w/ coffee	\$7.95
Baked Breakfast Burrito w/ homefries, baked beans & coffee	\$7.95
Greek Omelet w/ homefries, toast & coffee	\$6.95

Dinner Specials: 11am-Close

Chicken Mediterranean	\$13.95
Baked Stuffed Scallops	\$15.95
Boston Broiled Haddock	\$12.95
Prime Rib 12oz	\$14.95

Dinner Specials served with choice of soup or salad, and choice of potato



Where Zeus & Hera go to get their Ambrosia & Nectar
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CLOSED CHRISTMAS DAY AND NEW YEAR'S DAY

IF YOU NEVER LET ACTOR VAUGHN OR SINGER GILL GET THE BEST OF YOU, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE INVINCIBLE.



Today's puzzles are on Page F7