Karen A. Garafalo accepting plaque from Mayor Skip Speed, 2010

I remember the ribbon-cutting ceremony the day we opened the new addition to the Philmont Library, the Cultural Center, in 2010. I was very surprised to learn that they had decided to name the room after me! Rooms are usually named for a person who has died, and I was even still working there! And somehow in my mind, "Karen A. Garafalo" and "Cultural Center" didn't fit together! However, I had been the director of the library since 2005, and I'd been the interim director before that for about 8 or 10 years--only because I didn't want to be the director! During that time, we had a series of short-lived directors. I remember one day, we had a leak in the ceiling over the children's library and a few of the books were damaged. The brand new director just walked in, took a look at the ceiling and left the library. Her husband called that evening and asked if I could find a replacement for her. I said, "for tomorrow?" and he said, "no, for good." So back into the role I went.

I was also the general contractor for the building of the new addition--and it was a long haul. Chris Hoppe had designed the addition--he was on the library board at the time--, Linda Gatter did the windows and lighting, and James Dooling did the construction. Montag Oil did the radiant heat in the floors. All local people, and everyone gave us the best price. It was really a community effort.

The job at the library worked well for me. I was retired from teaching at the high school, and I desperately needed something to do! I had taught Business at Ackawamack; I wasn't a librarian. But I loved to read. And I knew people. And they knew me. After teaching for 34 years, I had

taught *every*one, and then I taught their kids, and then I taught their grandkids! Mary Potts was my student; Brian Johnson was my student. I started teaching when I was 21. I did my student teaching at Ackawamack, and then they just hired me, so I stayed.

That day of the ribbon cutting, the Village board was there and in the Cultural Center, we had a display of Thomas Locker paintings. Ruth Adams was our volunteer curator then. It was called the Cultural Center because we wanted to show art, and raise the level of culture in the community. It was hard to do, but we still did it. I remember another show called "Similar but Different," where we all put on Groucho Marx glasses--you know with the nose and mustache-- and some great local photographers took photos. From these, we made big posters of ourselves and we put them up around the village. This show was originally intended to bring awareness to the village's empty storefronts. We also had a show called "Floods and Fires of Philmont." Another exhibition was of Marlene Vidibor's beautiful textile work. We also had a historical display of Philmont by Damian Whittaker, a social studies teacher, that included young artists and kids artwork on display. In fact, we were the first to display a whole show of selfies! People came into the library and took selfies. The Cultural Center hosts the Ackawamack Artists and the Columbia County amatuer photographer exhibits annually. We have art sales, too. There was art worth hundreds of dollars and some that was just a dollar. We included anything "art." It was a great fundraiser! I think we did that twice. I'd love to see more art at the Cultural Center now. Ruth did about 6 shows a year, but we have no curator now.

By Karen Garafalo