Leslie Powell-Skinner of Eldridge, Iowa, last month was named the winner of the American Library Association's At My Library Creative Essay contest. She won $350 for her poem "A 'Cents'ible Resource."

The poem:

In these uncertain economic times, here's a truth that I have found
Using the Scott County Library is financially sound!

Years ago, when sudden unemployment left me in a lurch
I used the library to help with my new employment search

We visit the library as a free Saturday morning excursion
For parents, a break in routine is a welcome diversion!

I love the on-line card catalogue and use it quite frequently
If time is money, the library saves this precious commodity
With just a few clicks of the mouse
I find what I need without leaving my house!

I often request materials online and in one fell swoop
They're transferred to the Eldridge branch; emails keep me in the loop

I like to read the paper, search out garage sale ads or check out a magazine
Not subscribing to periodicals helps keep our spending lean

Reference materials from the library helped me learn to sew
A useful skill to save some "dough"

Captivating Caldecott Medal illustrations garner our kids' attention
Reading these beautiful stories helps with sight word retention

Libraries foster a love of reading and build our kids' literacy skills
Without the worry of incurring bills

Guest authors, movie days and workshops like "how to make a kite"
Provide fun, educational opportunities when money is tight

A giant kaleidoscope revealed spectacular designs at which to look
Free art exhibits equal savings for my pocketbook

Our younger kids and I attend story time each week
It has lively tales, crafts and the learning atmosphere I seek

Free CDs fuel our son's passion for music without spending a dime
Free DVDs and audio books make car trips more tolerable and help pass the time

When I was stuck in a "what to make for dinner" quandary
I turned to my local library
Thanks to food magazines and cookbooks galore
Menu planning has become less of a chore

I've checked out books like "how to feed your family for $12/day"
It has helped me grocery shop in an economical way

My husband loves Iron Chef and is a budding gourmet
For him, I researched books from Alton Brown and Bobby Flay
This "test drive a book before you buy" approach really makes sense
Just another way the library helps us minimize expense

A news report about a boy with prosthetic limbs sparked our daughter's curiosity
We borrowed books on this subject; they were totally free

The summer reading program helps feed our kids' imaginations
Staving off boredom improves our family relations

When our kids create masterpieces--artwork that we cherish and adore
Our library can laminate them for much less money than any store.

Having two kids in diapers can be financially draining!
I used the library for information to help with potty training

I hosted my daughter's birthday party when our budget was lean
Event planning books helped us organize our party and select our theme

When our daughter had to create a model rainforest biome
We borrowed illustrated science books to use at home

Thanks to lots of books from the "parents shelf"
I developed preschool curriculum all by myself!

The Scott County Library System has a "Friends of the Library" group
They sponsor used book sales and bazaars with prices that appeal to our troupe

The library distributed free tickets to a community theatre play
This exposed us to the arts in different way

I LOVE the Scott County Library Eldridge branch, the staff and service are A+
Our family is as loyal as they get; our library is first choice for us!