San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item VIII.

To: JPA Governing Board
From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Date: September 15, 2020
Meeting: September 21, 2020
Re: Director's Report

This report summarizes significant library operations and program activities that have occurred since the last meeting of the Operations Committee. Services and activities are aligned with our Strategic Plan Goals.

We understand community needs and promote meaningful library services as solutions.

Curbside Pickup and Printing

Curbside Pickup expanded to five days per week on July 14. Since then, we've filled over 33,000 appointments and significantly increased our weekly appointment average. In June, we checked out 11,875 items via curbside. By August, that number had grown to over 33,411 items. Curbside Pickup continues to be a vital service provider during challenging times.

Printing is set to launch on September 29. Printing services have always been in high demand at our libraries, and we are thrilled to soon offer this service virtually. In the coming weeks, our libraries will introduce printing via our curbside pickup, where a patron can send in their print job from the comfort of their own home. From there, our staff will package and place out printed items for patrons to pick up at our curbside tables. We understand that many in our communities rely on our printers for school assignments, employment applications and so much more, that's why we are dedicated to providing this support service free of charge.

"Thank you. I SO appreciate the library being open for curbside. I can't tell you how much joy it has brought me. Thank you for all you are doing during these tumultuous times."

"Just want to say big THANK YOU to all of you for your dedication to still make library work in pandemic. We understand and appreciate the tremendous amount of work you are pouring into it. We have a 4-year-old boy at home and library books have been a crucial part of his development. Every time we drive to library and pick up books, we are all very grateful. Thank you again!"

Caregiver Workshops

In an effort to support families and caregivers as they launch into the new school year, we have partnered with StarVista to host a monthly series of interactive workshops. The first workshop, "Managing Stress at Home," had 12 attendees during the English session and 10 attendees during the Spanish sessions. Attendees were able to ask questions about available resources and also share their own stories of how they are managing stress with their peers. Upcoming programs include topics on setting healthy boundaries at home, strategies for school engagement, mental health, and self-care. All sessions are recorded and available for viewing on the new Parent & Caregivers YouTube playlist.

Calm App

In these uncertain times, mental health challenges, such as anxiety stress, and insomnia, can arise. To help our community mitigate these issues, San Mateo County Libraries is proud to be the first public library to partner with Calm, a mindfulness app and service. Calm also offers mindfulness content for children, including short and fun guided meditations and stories, making it a useful tool for this school year. Library cardholders can check out a Calm account for six months and receive full access to all of Calm's premium content.

Tech Café

Keeping up with ever-changing technology can be difficult, even for those who interact with it every day. Our Tech Café series of programs offer a friendly setting to learn about technology concepts and how to use various tech tools. Participants can ask questions through conversation or text-based chat. Sessions cover a wide range of topics and we are always adding more. Topics include how to use Zoom and Curbside Pickup, library tools for student support, and homework help using HelpNow.

Workforce Wednesdays

Workforce Wednesdays, a workforce development program that started in July, provides partner led workshops such as Resume 101, Interviewing Skills, and Job Search Planning. These essential topics augment the existing workforce readiness services and fill up quickly. In September, sessions will focus on youth jobs and workforce readiness.

We are leaders in establishing a foundation for early literacy and supporting exploration and growth at every stage of life.

Wi-Fi hotspots

Prior to COVID-19, we offered more than 500 Wi-Fi hotspots and 200 laptop/Wi-Fi combos to patrons for check-out. During the COVID-19 closure, we procured an additional 500 hotspots and 3 high capacity hotspots that support up to 50 connections. We have distributed devices to community agencies and school districts to assist community members with telework and distance learning. Staff have worked to prioritize devices for students, workforce program participants, seniors, and vulnerable communities. Recently, we provided 20 laptop combos to students that lost their computers in the wildfires.

County Digital Divide Initiative

Students who lack basic internet connectivity are less likely to be able to adequately participate in distance learning. The County is working closely with schools and has identified significant digital divide challenges, particularly in communities that are less likely to have internet connectivity. To address these gaps, the County is exploring four internet service options and are targeting their efforts in the school districts of Ravenswood, East Palo Alto, and LaHonda/Pescadero. The four options range from providing extended public Wi-Fi to neighborhoods and apartment buildings, to providing internet service and Wi-Fi hotspots to students. San Mateo County Libraries has been invited to partner with the County to map the locations of our library devices to provide a comprehensive GIS heat map of service. Working together, the Library and County can be more strategic in the deployment of devices to help cover need throughout our communities.

Support for Distance Learning

As the new distance-learning academic year begins, we are prioritizing efforts to support schools through virtual class visits and database demonstrations, author visits, and providing teachers with books in print via curbside to support assigned reading and subject-specific homework. Additionally, we affirm the importance for all students in San Mateo County to have digital access to e-materials and academic support resources and are piloting a special universal student library card program in partnership with Redwood City Library for La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, Ravenswood School District, and Redwood City School District. Students in all three districts will receive virtual and physical library cards to provide access to all online resources and priority for virtual outreach to classrooms. Building on the success of STEAM kits issued to families during the Big Lift Inspiring Summer program, we are also pursuing interest in providing the pilot districts with STEAM take-home kits to support learning at home.

Live Interactive Storytime

Now more than ever, it is vital that our communities feel connected as we navigate through the challenges of 2020 together. To help spread joy and connectivity, we are excited to launch live storytimes that the whole family can enjoy. Hear your favorite songs and stories from the comfort of your own home in this lively interactive program for all ages. The programs are scheduled on Fridays in September at 10:30 a.m. and will feature different storytimes every week such as musical, bilingual Spanish, and more from our talented staff.

Author Talk on Women's Suffrage

On August 22 we hosted a virtual lecture and discussion titled "The Surprising Road to Women's Suffrage" with Dr. Ellen Carol DuBois. A distinguished professor at UCLA and author of Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote, Dr. DuBois' shared a virtual talk on the struggle for women's voting equity on the occasion of the 100-year anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that extended the right of suffrage to women. The program had 151 attendees.

Discover Local Authors at Between the Lines

Our followers can explore local authors and stories at our brand-new Between the Lines webpage. This space will be a one-stop shop for discovering stories from our communities and celebrating local writers. Published earlier this month, the page features virtual book clubs, past and future author events, and our new Story Café. Those familiar with National Public Radio's Selected Shorts will enjoy Story Café, our locally-inspired version where talented Bay Area storytellers share their best work. Every week, we will upload a video of a local author narrating a short story.

Online Library Resources

Overall, our eResource platforms have seen a 35% increase between last fiscal year and FY 2019-20. Students and lifelong learners are continuing to turn to our online databases and to support the shift to virtual services we have added the following new resources:

- referenceUSA supports job searching and business research needs.
- Pronunciator is a language learning service with courses in 163 languages (including ESL and ASL).
- ProCitizen assists learners in English and Spanish prepare for the civics, reading, and writing portions of the Naturalization Test.
- Creativebug offers an extensive list of online artistic and crafting classes like drawing, painting, sewing, baking, canning and preserving, and everything in between.

We cultivate an active presence and create spaces that support discovery, enrich lives and uplift the community.

National Voter Registration Day

National Voter Registration Day, a coordinated effort to register people to vote, is celebrated every year on the fourth Tuesday of September. As a trusted community resource, San Mateo County Libraries is excited to share accurate information with our communities. Over the next few weeks, we will be launching a dedicated webpage full of voter registration and election information, and we will be passing out vital voter information at all curbside locations. In addition, we will offer in person registration at our Belmont, East Palo Alto, Foster City and San Carlos Libraries. An exciting lineup of election events to help our communities further understand the impact of their vote includes Count and Be Counted: The Safety and Importance of Voting and Census in the Era of COVID on September 24 and League of Women Voters Forums on October 1 and 17.

Equity Work and Author Visit

We are committed to making our libraries equitable for all. Staff are continuing to engage in meaningful conversations, and some are voluntarily participating in a 21 Day Racial and Social Equity Challenge. Reaffirming our commitment to education and community dialogue, we have made a number of titles available without holds through our eBook collections and we are hosting or supporting community programs on racial and social justice.

On Tuesday, September 29 we are excited to host one of the world's leading experts on unconscious bias, Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt. Dr. Eberhardt is a professor of psychology at Stanford University, co-director of SPARQ, a university initiative to use social psychological research to address pressing social problems, and author of Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think and Do. Her live lecture will explore how bias affects all our lives.

Volunteers

We have now transitioned some of our in-person volunteers to be fully online! Volunteers from many different branches and roles, including Friends of the Library, youth tutors, computer coaches, and in-person ESL club volunteers, are supporting our English Conversation Clubs and Adult Literacy program. They have persevered through some of the challenges that come with transitioning to online programming and are already forging bonds and lending their talents to our virtual community. Our Friends of the Library and Foundation board members continue meeting and raising funds for the library. Finally, skilled sewing volunteers are making masks for staff and patrons with a goal to make 1,000 masks. We're thrilled to have their support!

Atherton Library Project

Construction of the new library is well underway with the curing of the rammed earth walls. Interior rough-in construction is booked for the next couple of weeks. This work includes welding steel, erecting the walls, and installing the metal roof deck. Recently, Library staff have worked with the Town to re-engage the project architects at WRNS to start work on interior furnishing selections. All project activities are on track for a late 2021 completion.

The Town Council has identified several naming opportunities for the Library project. At the July 27 meeting, the Atherton Town Council voted unanimously to name a small conference room in the new library after Giants baseball legend Willie Mays. Mr. Mays has generously offered to provide some personal memorabilia for the space: https://www.almanacnews.com/news/2020/07/28/willie-mays-to-be-honored-in-naming-of-new-atherton-library-conference-room

Brisbane Library Project

We are thrilled that the new Brisbane Library is weeks away from completion. A large part of the recent construction work has been focused on the interior build out work and exterior concrete pouring. Next steps include energizing the building and electrical testing. Library staff anticipate coordinating the shelving, furniture, and equipment installation in late September and moving the library collection in October. Curbside services will not be interrupted during this time as we move into the new library.

After three years of fundraising for the new library, the Friends of the Brisbane Library have reached their goal of raising $100,000. A main part of this fundraising effort is a mixed media Donor Wall incorporating a mural and donor tiles that will be installed in the library's courtyard. The Friends went through an extensive artist selection process for the Donor Wall and have selected Precita Eyes Muralists Association, Inc. based out of San Francisco. The finished donor tiles and mural artwork is scheduled for a late October installation. In response to the new COVID-19 environment, City and Library staff are working together on creative solutions for a virtual library dedication and grand opening celebration soon.

Annual Report

We are pleased to present the 2019-2020 Annual Report and would like to thank our champions who support our libraries and help us reach our goals, including the Library JPA Governing Board and Operations Committee, the many Friends of the Library groups, the Foundation for San Mateo County Libraries, our dedicated volunteers and generous donors, and special thanks to our wonderfully resilient library staff. The report will be sent to each jurisdiction and is available at https://smcl.org/annual-reports/.