



**Volunteers
share time
and talent,
as libraries
develop new
advocates**

**Makerspaces help kids gain
confidence and learn skills**

**Aquarium partners with
libraries for ocean experience**

Georgia Aquarium partners with libraries for ocean experience

A new traveling toolkit featuring technology and educational activities about the ocean ecosystem is now touring public libraries in Georgia. Jointly designed by the Georgia Aquarium and Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), the toolkit, called Poseidon, enables libraries to host marine life-centric programming.

“This toolkit will bring the ocean to life for patrons who may not ever be able to visit the aquarium,” said Dustin Landrum, manager of strategic partnerships at GPLS. “Children and parents can put on a headset and explore a virtual ocean – swim with manatees, observe sharks and go deep-sea diving – in the library!”

More than 120 children attended partnership launch events this summer at the Alpharetta Branch library and the Vidalia-Toombs County Library.

At the launch events, children also learned to create origami penguins, checked out books about the ocean and “swam” in the ocean through virtual reality.

“The Poseidon program gave children an experience they will remember for a lifetime,” said Cameron Asbell, director of the Ochopee Regional Library System. “I hope they gained a deeper understanding of ocean life and continue to have the passion for the learning we saw during the program.”

Here are more adventures you can have with your free public library card:

- Explore Georgia State Parks by checking out a ParkPass from your local public library.
- Ask about free passes to great places like Zoo Atlanta, the Center for Puppetry Arts, Go Fish Education Center and the Carlos Museum.
- Your K-12 student can earn free Atlanta Hawks, Braves or Gladiators tickets by reading and registering online.

Be sure to check with your local library about the availability of these popular partnerships. ■

Deborah Hakes



Renewed focus to reach underserved community making strides in Hall County

Libraries are a vital community center, provide youth with programming to build a love of reading and have resources and training for students of all ages. But for residents of the East Hall community, these services have been unavailable for years.

“There is a high rate of poverty in East Hall, and when the library closed in 2011, people were cut off from our services,” said Lisa McKinney, director of the Hall County Library System. “There is little internet service there, and many residents lack transportation to get to another library, which would be at least a 20-minute drive.”

A second challenge was shifting local demographics. Many residents in East Hall primarily speak Spanish, so as the library tried to build bridges through pop-up

Since the library in east Hall County was permanently closed during the Great Recession, most residents have had no reasonable access to a library – until now.

events, it was difficult to help people understand how library services could benefit them because library staff only spoke English.

Without the possibility of reopening a physical building, the library sought other ways to make inroads in East Hall. Three grants have made possible a new strategy to reach this underserved community. The local Friends of the Library group provided funds for summer programs at the East Hall Community Center, starting with summer reading performances in summer 2017. Programming expanded when local business Jackson EMC granted money for a pop-up library, including transportable shelving materials and check-out technology, and then the library system received a Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) grant to hire two Spanish-speaking teen summer interns.

With the three grants in place, the library held a robust set of programs in East Hall this summer.

Alyssa Ramos, 16, was one of the two YALSA-sponsored library interns. "I wanted to do something good for the community and for myself," she said.

She provided essential Spanish-language outreach at the Hispanic Health Alliance Fair, where she showcased how libraries can be beneficial. Many attendees had mistakenly thought that a library card cost money, and they didn't know that libraries had free internet or youth programming. More than 100 people signed up for a library card that day - the most ever for the system at an event.

Foreign-language checkout of materials has increased 22 percent in one year as the library prioritized staff language ability, outreach events to East Hall and



Adrienne Junius

Intern Doris Toledo (left) translated materials for Hall County Library's special needs services into Spanish and organized the Spanish collection to be more searchable. Doris and Alyssa Ramos (pictured on page 2), both YALSA interns, also developed an improved marketing and services plan for Hispanic patrons.

partnerships with the Hispanic Alliance and the local Congolese refugee community.

The library recently held a reptile show at the East Hall Community Center, where more than 130 people learned about alligators, snakes and turtles and browsed the pop-up library.

"I had people stopping me in the hallway to say they were grateful for the library coming to their community," said Adrienne Junius, director of youth services for Hall County Library. "We were so excited to be able to tell them that the community center will be a permanent place for library programming during the summer months. There also will be a library presence throughout the year at school and community events." ■



Adrienne Junius

Makerspaces help kids gain confidence, learn skills and expand possibilities

When Young Adult Librarian Micah Newsome launched the makerspace at Columbia County Library in Evans, Ga, he hoped the monthly programming would give teenagers a foundation to explore new interests.

“There was a kid named David who came to my first session,” said Micah. “David was very hesitant to explore his interests. He wasn’t able to improvise or move forward with projects without explicit direction, and he also struggled to collaborate with peers.”

Three years later, David is a young adult who builds his own flashlights with the 3-D printer and parts he orders online, and helps others learn as well.

“Our goal is to encourage teens to use their minds,” said Micah. “When they develop new skills, see projects through from conception to completion and assist their peers, they are learning to think in new ways. Those ways of thinking will help them be successful for the rest of their lives.”

Makerspace programming typically includes electronics design, computer modeling, coding, 3-D design and a tangible end product. One of the first major projects was to create a large LED display using metal letters from a building, some hands-on electrical work and then program a microprocessor board to run light shows.

The makerspace began in 2014 when the library obtained a STEAM grant from Georgia Public Library Service, funded by the Library Services and Technology Act through the Institute of Museum and Library Services, to purchase a 3-D printer and electronics equipment. At first, patrons came in simply to tinker with the new technology.

“The 3-D printer is such a cool piece of equipment, but I’ve found that it’s the more everyday items that keep people interested,” said Micah. “The people who come back every month focus on electronics, coding and making something. We recently made a solar-powered Bluetooth speaker. People can use and enjoy it; it gets them excited.”

The library offers youth-focused makerspace pro-

gramming twice a month to connect with kids who may not normally come to a library. The makerspace draws teens in, and then the library can engage their interest to come back. Sessions are usually completely full. Micah plans to continue growing the makerspace by adding lower-tech craft-focused programs, such as sewing and weaving.

Makerspaces and youth-driven learning through experimentation can help kids gain confidence and make friends as they discover new interests, develop talents and even potentially find a future career.

The makerspace is designed to be a collaborative environment that encourages participants to share expertise, solve problems and learn new skills. Micah is always available to assist with instruction and troubleshoot when needed.

“Through the makerspace, I’ve learned a lot about

“When kids develop new skills, see projects from conception to completion and assist their peers, they are learning to think in new ways. Those ways of thinking will help them be successful for the rest of their lives.”



Erica Rainey

designing 3-D models, how to follow instructions to complete a project and how to improvise to make things work,” said David, now 17. “Now I have the confidence to put everything I’ve learned together to make my own projects.”

David attended a recent makerspace program and brought his younger brother, Jonathan, who is learning how to code. Their family is moving to another community this summer, and one of David’s first priorities will be to find his new local library.

“I’ll check out books and go to the programs. Hopefully they have a makerspace,” he said. ■

MAKERSPACES IN GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

There are more than 35 makerspaces across Georgia public libraries; you can find one near you at georgialibraries.org/makerspaces.

Some library systems have found creative ways to implement maker programs when there isn’t physical space:

The **Three Rivers Regional Library System’s** traveling makerspace, The Imagination Station, features stations for kids to create 3-D pens, jewelry or magnets from old computer parts; play with a giant wooden erector set; or build circuits to turn objects like bananas into musical instruments. “I love seeing parents and children creating and imagining together,” said Erica Rainey, program coordinator.

Sequoyah Regional Library System has Maker Monday each month. The children’s-focused pop-up makerspace goes to each library branch with self-directed making, tinkering and STEAM activities. Kids create bracelets, art, slime and more, and each month they work with new objects and topics from marbles to aeronautics.

The **West Georgia Regional Library System** STEAM Engine brings creative technology experiences to students. With help from two IMLS grants provided through Georgia Public Library Service, the system takes the STEAM Engine to libraries and schools for hands-on learning and includes 3-D printing, robotics, photography and electricity. The STEAM Engine has reached over 27,000 youth since it hit the road in 2015.



Micha Newsome

“Through the makerspace, I’ve learned a lot about designing 3-D models, how to follow instructions to complete a project and how to improvise to make things work. Now I have the confidence to put everything I’ve learned together to make my own projects,” said David, 17, patron at Columbia County Library.



Sequoyah Regional Library



Deborah Hakes

Volunteers share time and talent, as libraries develop new advocates

When Carlos Kanzler, 17, moved with his family to Grantville, Ga, from their home in Venezuela, he was shy and didn't speak much English. But when exploring the small town by foot one day, he saw a familiar sign and knew he belonged in his new community. With a big smile remembering the moment, he exclaimed: "There is a library here!"

Now Carlos has become a fixture at the Grantville Library, where he volunteers at least three times a week, providing translation to Spanish-speaking patrons, helping at events such as the Summer Food Program and shelving materials to bolster the capacity of the two full-time staff. Along the way, he also has gained confidence in social situations, improved his English and learned customer service skills. He is the library's only volunteer, and one of 10 overall for the four-branch Coweta Public Library.

"Carlos has been a gift to us," said Branch Manager Marie Vielot. "Having someone who can speak multiple languages opens the door to new patrons. Carlos also is a musician, and he shares his time and talent. He is irreplaceable, but as he prepares to leave for college next fall, we have realized the need to think strategically about recruiting volunteers. We want to find people with specific skills to help us broaden our impact."

Larger library systems like Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System (AFPLS) have volunteers at all 34 branches. In 2017, AFPLS volunteers served more than 60,000 hours, which is the same amount of hours served by 30 full-time employees.

While many volunteers help with clerical tasks or shelving materials, those with a specific talent or interest are cultivated as much as possible. For example, a volunteer in Sandy Springs teaches a monthly Korean brush painting class, and a retired banker brings his therapy dog to East Roswell Library to help children build reading skills.



Deborah Hakes



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"This is the most rewarding thing I've ever done," said volunteer Dave Hobe, owner to Fergus the Bearded Collie. "Kids build confidence when they read to Fergus, and they have fun."



Roy Cummings

“Organizations that preserve and share historically significant information often do so with limited resources. It’s important that people are giving their time and talent to make sure this work continues.”

–Alana Barnes, volunteer at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History

“This is the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done,” said Dave Hobe, owner to Fergus the Bearded Collie, who was greeted warmly by every patron in East Roswell when he recently visited. “Fergus brings joy to people. There was one child who struggled with reading and was so nervous the first time he came here. Now he sits right down next to Fergus and begins to read out loud. Kids build confidence when they read to Fergus, and they have fun.”

Volunteers are often passionate library lovers who not only provide extra hands and talent, but also become strong advocates in their communities.

Many library systems cultivate teen advocates as volunteers during the busy summer months to help with children’s programming, such as Houston County Public Library System’s Teen Ambassador Program; Chattahoochee Valley, where the teen program has grown to 60 volunteers in just two years; and in Forsyth County, where some youth have transitioned from participating

in Summer Reading Program as children to volunteering in high school, with some volunteers also seeking and finding employment at the library as adults.

“The teens help us in many ways, and they earn volunteer hours for National Honor Society and other clubs,” said Stephen Kight, deputy director of Forsyth County Library. “They also share their ideas – they help keep the library cool for all ages.” ■



Deborah Hakes

Grantville Library volunteer Carlos Kanzler, 17, helps the library better serve Spanish-speaking patrons by providing translation and advocating for its services in the community. A cello player, he also shares his talent with patrons during programming. Along the way, he has gained confidence in social situations, improved his English and learned customer service skills.



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Roy Cummings



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