



GEORGIA PUBLIC
LIBRARY SERVICE

LIBRARY NEWS

A newsletter for friends and employees of Georgia's public libraries

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A young girl with dark hair pulled back is shown in profile, looking out a window. She has two circular gold face paint designs on her cheeks. Her right arm is raised, reaching towards a green plant visible through the window. The window has white vertical bars or frames. The background inside the room is blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf.

**Libraries
grow their
communities**

**Discovering the library
everywhere**

**News from around Georgia
and more!**

Take your library on vacation with you

By Assistant State Librarian Wendy Cornelisen

June is Audiobook Month, and more Georgians are discovering the diverse selection of free audiobooks at the library, either on disc or as a downloadable audio file. In fact, state residents checked out 2,285,761 audiobooks in 2017, an increase of 26 percent from 2016.

With kids out of school and vacation season here, listening to audiobooks is a fun way to keep learning all summer.

Listening to stories provides context and helps kids figure out the meaning of new vocabulary words, and it has the added benefit of modeling the correct pronunciation of those words.

Georgia's public libraries have over 500,000 audiobooks on tape or CD, and almost 300,000 downloadable audio files. These downloadable audiobooks go on a smartphone or tablet and are easy to take anywhere.

Audiobooks are the ultimate multitasking tool. They work wherever there's a device that plays them, and with the right headphones are hands-free. That makes them the perfect

solution to a long commute or boring household chores and a great companion on long walks.

Listening to books together gives families a way to talk about all kinds of topics and makes any summer road trip more enjoyable. When selecting titles, remember that kids can listen to and comprehend stories up to two grade levels above their reading level.

Adding in audiobooks helps even the youngest members of the family learn to read. While many claim that audiobooks are cheating, listening to stories helps kids gain the skills they need to be good readers.

Students who struggle with reading print material get the same story when they listen to the audiobook. Pairing the print and the audio can increase retention of the material. It's an especially helpful combination for dialogue-heavy literary classics. With a skilled narrator, the story comes alive.

At the end of the day, it doesn't matter how the book was read. The story shines through either way. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Jubilee celebrations bring together community, local artists and even a Heisman Trophy winner

To honor the 25th anniversary of the renovation of all six Thomas County Public Library System's library branches, each location held a Jubilee celebration last month.

Retiring Director Nancy Tillinghast led the system for 27 years. "I'm most proud that through our efforts and partnerships, there is an increase in literacy rates in our communities. I have loved seeing children grow up using the library and then returning years later with their own children."

One local youth who returned was Heisman Trophy winner and Thomasville native Charlie Ward Jr. He spoke at one event and signed copies of a new book about his life.

"I wanted to help celebrate the library, which helped develop my mind and a love of reading growing up," said Ward. His Heisman Trophy is displayed at the Thomasville Library for patrons to see.

Moultrie-Colquitt County Library System awarded grant to improve technology and accessibility

"We are so excited to receive this grant from Sabal Trail Community Outreach Investment Program," said Director Holly

Phillips. "The funds will allow us to purchase the technology that our patrons need to further their education, find jobs, do research and enjoy educational and cultural events with us. We are very fortunate to be able to outfit the renovated library with these expanded tech offerings."

As part of the grant, The Ellen Payne Odom Genealogy Library will receive a microfilm scanner to produce high-resolution, archival quality images. An overhead book scanner will allow for the creation of digital images while protecting fragile, older texts.

Friends of the Hart County Library win award

The Friends of the Hart County Library have grown their bookstore from a room in the basement to a three-room storefront staffed by volunteers and open four days a week, in addition to organizing an annual wine-and-cheese fundraiser, silent auction and more. Their efforts were recognized recently with the "Fabulous Friends" award from the statewide Friends of Georgia Libraries organization.

"Library staff and the Friends have a great working relationship and definitely appreciate one another," said Director Richard Sanders. "They provide materials and refreshments, and their testimonials helped Hart County Library earn recognition as Georgia Public Library of the Year in 2016." ■



Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, Okefenokee Regional Library System, Deborah Hakes

Discovering the library everywhere

Unique outreach initiatives connect libraries to their communities and lead to deeper impact.

At the Daybreak homeless center in Macon, Ga., up to 125 individuals come through each day to build friendships, eat a hot meal, take a shower, wash their clothes, and now, for the opportunity to learn computer literacy skills through the Middle Georgia Regional Library's Libraries Without Walls initiative, as they rebuild their lives.

"Often a series of life events, one after the other, leads to people becoming homeless," said Sister Theresa Sullivan, program director at Daybreak. "We help them to step-by-step regain their footing and find a job and a permanent home. Learning computer skills and reading books open our clients' minds to dream of possibilities beyond today."

Community Engagement Coordinator Saul Hernandez visits twice a month. He greets individuals in Daybreak's common area, which holds a mix of tables, chairs, bookshelves and a kitchen, and offers people one-on-one, personalized training sessions.

"Computers can be very intimidating to those we serve, but Saul has a gift for inviting people in and meeting them where they are," said Sullivan. "He treats people with dignity, and as a result, our partnership is showing impact."

Stan Jones, 65, is a well-spoken individual whose kind-

ness shows immediately on his face and in his voice. After a lifetime of work including most recently as a banquet steward, he became homeless after job loss and ongoing health issues.

"What Saul taught me has led to tangible benefits in my life," said Jones. "He showed me how to better research credible resources on the internet. For example, I applied for a medication discount card online, so I now can afford medicine to address my health."

Two other individuals have found employment thanks to the computer skills they gained at his computer, job search and resume workshops.

"This type of outreach helps our libraries become an authentic part of the community and develop a deep-

“ We have the opportunity to make a key difference in people’s lives by removing barriers and sharing information. ”

er connection to the people we want to serve,” said Jennifer Lautzenheiser, director of the Middle Georgia Regional Library System. “Our mission is to connect people to information they need to improve their lives, and our traveling branch, Library Without Walls, really embodies the difference we hope to make in people’s lives.”

Other public libraries are finding creative ways to get out into the community as well. Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System has launched a library bike, and Outreach Librarian Oscar Gittemeir takes the motorized bicycle to places where transportation is a barrier for residents, including barbershops, area parks and senior centers.

“We dust off people’s notions of what a library is,” said Gittemeir. “I bring a fun activity to catch their attention, and when they leave our setup, they have a library card and our apps on their mobile device!”

The key to outreach success is to identify what is popular or needed in a community.

The Waycross-Ware County Public Library pursues their mission as a community center through OkeCon, an annual event that celebrates geek culture.

OkeCon, like commercial fan conventions, includes many activities happening at the same time: Lego, kids’ crafts, an art contest, cosplay contest, virtual reality



Gayle Martel/Daybreak

“Saul showed me how to better research credible resources on the internet. For example, I applied for a medication discount card online, so I now can afford medicine to address my health,” said Stan Jones.

gaming, maker activities, Minecraft, and even discussion panels. The library uses OkeCon as an opportunity to showcase its manga, comic book, anime, and board game collections as well as resources like computers, virtual reality and its 3-D printer.

Okefenokee Regional Library System



OkeCon is an opportunity for the library to help people connect and form a community. Now in its third year, OkeCon recently had 550 attendees. Thirteen staff members and over 30 volunteers helped run the event.



Okefenokee Regional Library System

"There are people who have lived here their whole lives and never knew there were others like them, who shared their interests, right here in south Georgia," said Kathleen McClure, librarian with the Okefenokee Regional Library, which manages the event. "OkeCon is an opportunity for the library to help these people connect and form a community."

Now in its third year, OkeCon recently had 550 attendees. Thirteen staff members and over 30 volunteers helped run the event.

"The event helps draw people into the library," said Macie Britt, president of the Anime Culture Club in Waycross. "It helps you meet new people and see what your community has to offer."

These outreach activities across Georgia's libraries reach potential patrons who otherwise may not utilize their services, and they also help libraries meet the needs of people who are unserved or underserved.

For Stan Jones back at the Daybreak shelter, the library has removed obstacles as he better his health and engages in lifelong learning.

"We have the opportunity to make a key difference in people's lives by removing barriers and sharing information," said Saul Hernandez. "This is what all libraries should strive to do." ■

Want more library news and stories of impact?

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Deborah Hakes

Saul Hernandez at Peek-A-Boo Daycare Center in Macon, where he leads storytime twice a month on behalf of the Middle Georgia Regional Library and teaches the prekindergarten youth Spanish vocabulary words. "Saul's visits are beneficial; he's a natural with the kids," said Director Sheryl Lawrence. "I have parents tell me that their 4-year-olds are speaking Spanish at home. The library has bridged a language gap for us."

Growing community in Gwinnett



Deborah Hakes

Tower gardens are a centerpiece of popular programming in the 15 branches of the Gwinnett County Public Library, and now the unique initiative is being recognized on a national scale.

The National Association of Counties acknowledged Homegrown Gwinnett, a community gardening initiative initially funded by a Sparks! Ignition grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, as an innovative county government program that strengthens services for residents.

The gardens have led to programs on healthy nutrition, addressed local food insecurity, brought diverse cultures together through food, and provided a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) experience for all ages.

“These tower gardens have compelled each library to reach out to their communities to learn what they need, and through gardening and the resulting produce, serve underrepresented populations across the county. The Homegrown Gwinnett initiative demonstrates that libraries can serve our communities beyond books,” said Meg Wilson, Norcross Branch manager.

Community partnerships have been built, strengthened and expanded. And the towers have cast a wide net of engagement both inside the library and out in the community. Programming attendance has

increased by seven percent systemwide since the towers were installed.

During one recent morning at the Norcross Branch, preschoolers planted sunflower seeds and then tasted greens growing on the tower garden. Shortly afterward, a group from Peregrine's Landing Senior Living visited to learn how the garden works and to plant seedlings.

"Lifelong learning enriches our residents' lives, many of whom have short-term memory loss," said Sabrina Henry, the activity director at Peregrine Senior Living. "Gardening at the library is a way for them to participate in something they have enjoyed for most of their lives. One of our seniors loves to 'check' on her plants and then brags to her family about their progress!"

The gardens also help address local food insecurity because libraries share their harvest with community centers, Meals on Wheels, food pantries and more. While each individual tower may seem small, it can be harvested every three to four months, and the impact adds up. In 2017, the 15 locations made a total of 215 produce donations across Gwinnett County.

"Each branch has the opportunity to customize how they use their tower," said Wilson. "Some have tried hand pollination, school classes adopting a garden, Master Gardeners conducting workshops, and we even recently had children making popsicles using tower basil leaves as flavoring. There's no limit to what we can do with the gardens as a jumping-off point." ■

(Left) Gardening is incorporated into storytime, as children place paper flowers on a board to learn about different colors.

(Right) The tower gardens are a jumping-off point for programming for both young and old, as well as for curious library visitors. Here a young patron plants seeds that will be placed in the garden.

(Below) A group from Peregrine's Landing Senior Living visits the Norcross Branch monthly to learn how the garden works and to plant seedlings.

"Gardening at the library is a way for our residents to participate in something they have enjoyed for most of their lives," said Sabrina Henry, activity director at Peregrine Senior Living."



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Information presented in this newsletter will be provided in alternative formats on request. For more information about Georgia's libraries, visit georgialibraries.org

Deborah Hakes



The Summer Reading Program has launched across Georgia!

Visit your local library to sign up and receive incentives for reading and attending enrichment activities. Engaging kids in summer reading is critical to prevent the "summer slide," so when youth begin school again, they pick up learning right where they left off.