

in the news

friends of the fresno county public library

annual meeting newsletter

2021



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From the President

As the president of the board, I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our board members, our branch boards, and our members. It has been a trying year in more ways than we can express here, but your patience has endured and the Library has continued to serve the public in the best ways possible.

In lieu of our annual meeting this year, we thought we would share some highlights of how the Library has shown its creativity. As we look forward to things opening up more and more, we will continue finding that there are always new ways that we can serve. Let us continue to strive to become better at what we do each day.

Christopher Estep



photos by Stephen Mayu

From the County Librarian Raman Bath

I'm pleased to share with you the achievements my team at the Fresno County Public Library has accomplished during a most challenging year. While we have been disappointed that we cannot serve our community in person, I'm proud to say that our team has stepped up to the challenge of meeting the community's needs in expanded and some brand new ways.

When we first closed for indoor services in March of 2020, it was challenging to say the least. Many of our staff volunteered to work in the Department of Public Health as disaster service workers and provided much-needed contact tracing. Currently, the Library still

has employees working as medical investigators, contact tracers, and even several who have volunteered to work in the vaccination clinics to help roll out vaccines to those who need them most.

For the staff who continued their library duties, we quickly realized that our focus had to shift to virtual. Our branches were switched to permanent Wi-Fi mode allowing 24/7 access for the first time. In many branches, we were able to expand access points and network coverage and improve speeds to ensure patrons had adequate access to the technology they needed.

By May 18, the Library opened curbside services, the first to do so in the Central Valley. This function has continued unabated since then, and the feedback we receive from the community has been overwhelmingly

Continued on back page

“Did you know that you can read the digital editions of newspapers like the Fresno Bee, the San Francisco Chronicle, and The New York Times every day through the library’s website?”

Tiffany Polfer, FCPL

The Big Read

This year, FCPL has partnered with Fresno City College to bring the Big Read to the Valley.

This year’s chosen book is *An American Sunrise* by Joy Harjo, the current US Poet Laureate and the first Native American to receive this achievement.

The Big Read project will highlight Native American issues by engaging local cultural communities as both audience and participants in a series of book discussions, dance, music, readings, storytelling, and visual arts activities centered on the text.

Key events are the Kickoff (March 4), featuring readings from the book and discussions about the book and poetry, book discussions held by FCPL and FCC, a virtual art exhibit that draws connections between visual art, language, cultural expression, and ecology, a documentary screened by CMAC, a virtual dance performance, and the program ends with a virtual visit by Joy Harjo on April 24.

During the Big Read, FCPL will be offering

Nancy Jacoby

FCPL’s online resources are pandemic-proof

While the pandemic had a significant effect on in-person browsing at the library, the library’s digital services continued uninterrupted. FCPL’s OverDrive and cloudLibrary collections of ebooks are always available for browsing and borrowing on your favorite device. Many titles, including bestsellers and newer releases, and a wide selection of magazines are available instantly. And now, when your ebook holds become available, you can download the title right away or you can choose “deliver later,” which passes the book to the next person but keeps you at the front of the line. This feature helps you manage your holds and gives you more control, which is perfect if your reading list is a mile long (whose isn’t?) or you’re usually in the middle of a good book.

Speaking of always-available online resources, did you know that you can read the digital editions of newspapers like the Fresno Bee, the San Francisco Chronicle, and The New York Times every day through the library’s website? All you need is your library card number.

Your card gives you access to other great online resources, too—available any time of the day or night from the comfort of your home. There’s unlimited streaming of a vast collection of music, as well as five free song downloads a week, with Freegal. And movie lovers who are missing the theater can watch films and documentaries with Kanopy.

Without a doubt, we’re all looking forward to returning to our favorite library branches and searching the shelves for the next good book, CD, or movie. But thanks to FCPL’s online resources, the library never closes completely and books, music, and movies that can enrich our lives are always at our fingertips. Now is a great time to become familiar with these resources and let them add a new dimension to the way you use the library—even when its doors are open again.

unlimited checkouts of the ebook and e-audiobook through Overdrive—no one will have to wait for their copy of the book. All events are free to the public.

Visit www.fresnocitycollege.edu/bigread for more details.

Jennifer Bethel, FCPL

Online program highlight: literacy services' families learning together / family loteria

Our Literacy Team has been hard at work this past year, continuing working with families, individuals, and tutors to learn the technology skills needed to meet online and continue to develop literacy skills during the pandemic. The team recently wrapped up a 5-week series on Zoom called "Families Learning Together" which brought together families from across the County with children of all ages registered as a unit to set literacy goals for their families. Each family received their own copy of the picture book *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales about a young family who discovers opportunity and hope through books and reading at their local public library. The narrator of the book tells us after a visit to the library: "Books became our language. Books became our home. Books became our lives. We learned to read, speak, write, and make our voices heard. Someday we will become something we haven't even yet imagined. But right now...We are stories. We are two languages. We are lucha. We are resilience. We are hope. We are dreamers, soñadores of the world. We are love, amor."

Families in the program are encouraged to write the dreams and aspirations they have for their family inside the cover of the book as a keepsake and a reminder of their goals. Over the course of the program where the families attend each week, they play games like Loteria, which is a Mexican game similar to Bingo, but instead of numbers drawn from ping pong balls, a deck of cards is used with images on each card: El gallo (the rooster), La Dama (the lady), El Tambor (the drum) and many more. In between the games which keep the kids (and adults!) attentive and in good spirits, the Literacy team engages each family to talk about progress on literacy goals and practice. As the weeks progress, the families become more comfortable with the program but also with each other and the technology. During each online session, the team reminds the participants how to navigate Zoom, how to use the chat feature, to share their screens, to use the whiteboard, and builds in opportunities to practice these new skills. The Literacy team notices that by the end of the program series even the shy participants have their cameras on, speak up more, share progress freely, ask questions, and are eager to continue working with the library. The combination of literacy skills, goal setting, and working with technology gives everyone confidence that isn't always apparent at the start of the program.

Nancy Kast

Used Books for Sale!

Are you missing the Big Book Sale—the annual used book sale at Sierra Vista Mall? We have a smaller, more manageable alternative for these times. Friends of the Library has a store on the corner of Clovis and Kings Canyon, next door to the Sunnyside Library. Currently open just two mornings each week (Thursdays and Saturdays from 9:00 to noon), the site holds many shelves of books donated to support our library branches. Children's books, cookbooks, Westerns, romance, lots of non-fiction, and the assortment changes daily as new donations are added. Prices vary from 25 cents to \$3 per volume—a great deal for book lovers.

Volunteers are needed. We would love to be open more days and hours, but we are an all-volunteer operation. If you are interested in helping out for a few hours each month please stop by and let us know. We need stock clerks as well as customer service clerks. We provide training. We have plexiglass screens, require masks, provide hand sanitizer, and control capacity to combat the pandemic risks.

If you have books to
donate, call (559)492-6657
see fresnofol.org for more info

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From the County Librarian (continued from front)

positive. People were glad to browse, even if it was through a window or outdoors, check out books, pick up holds, make copies and obtain prints. They appreciated just being able to talk to someone, too, and there was a genuine feeling that the community missed the staff and the services we provide.

With programs going online, it was natural that the Summer at Your Library would be 100% virtual as well. We still had some branches provide State-mandated lunches in a safe and contactless manner. Many Friends groups also provided the opportunity for staff to supply “take and make” crafts for the community during this time. The Library implemented the Bookpoints reading program, an online platform that encouraged and tracked reading. This meant we could still provide prizes and incentives for young and adult readers alike, further cementing that even with the pandemic, the Library was still here for the community. Our performances were switched to social media allowing for slideshows, videos, and the like to be aired on Facebook, the website, and our YouTube channel. Many staff continued engaging the community with book discussion and chat series via Zoom to ensure that despite any social distancing restrictions, we could still reach out to our communities.

Naturally, our Overdrive and e-book collection has been seeing record usage every month while curbside services have remained steady. We still circulate about 30% of the materials we usually would when we are open, but the back-end storage, quarantine of items, and circulation has become a very labor-intensive endeavor. That’s not the case for the virtual collection. It increases so rapidly that in time it will even eclipse the biggest circulating branches in the system combined. It’s already the most circulating “branch” with over 2,700 circulations in a day but will likely outpace the regionals combined at this rate. All our databases, whether used for children in school or adults needing access to the paper or magazines, have flourished.

During this time, the branches have been updated to ensure compliance with COVID restrictions. Safety for staff and the public is of paramount concern, so physical barriers and signage are commonplace. Staff regularly clean after interactions, and all high-traffic areas are also further cleaned on an hourly basis. Our maintenance and facilities team sanitizes locations in need and this process ensures the safety of our staff and the public.

We have been proactive and have served as a leader for library services across the Central Valley and, to some extent, the state. We have been operating 1-2 days per week for indoor services for many months now and this too was welcome news to the community. As restrictions begin to ease further, we will continue to provide services and expand our role to get Library business back to normal.

In closing, the pandemic has shifted our focus to a virtual environment. While we are pleased to meet the community’s needs in this way, it cannot compare to the traditional programs and services the Library provides.

“For the staff who continued their library duties, we quickly realized that our focus had to shift to virtual.”

Only so much can be done remotely, and curbside services, while a blessing, do not make up for the role a library serves in the community. Once we get back to a sense of normal, I look forward to opening meeting rooms back up and having face-to-face programming once again without the fear of spreading an illness. Until then, we will work with our community partners, the staff, the Friends, and other County agencies to continue providing support as best as possible wherever we can as long as the pandemic persists.

Thank you,
Raman

