

# Johnson County Library Monthly Book Report



October 2018



## Library Lets Loose: An Interview with Jen Mann

*Library Lets Loose*, indeed. The Central Resource Library proved that you can create a little bit of magic when you bring artists, performers and creatives together to share their stories and journeys. On Sunday, September 29th, the Library Lets Loose event brought musicians, literary talent and artists under one roof in a night that will be remembered.

Jen Mann is one of those women and, once you meet her, you'll agree that she won't soon be forgotten. As busy as she is, Mann agreed to pass along her thoughts in a fun Q&A session that gives a little insight into the New York Times bestselling author behind the books.

**A common reaction to your work is that you say what others wish they could. Why do you think your honesty resonates with so many people? When you meet fans of your work, what are other typical reactions they have to your take on life?**

## Top Ten



### Top Ten September Holds

**Fear: Trump in the White House** | Bob Woodward

**Girl, Wash Your Face: Stop Believing the Lies About Who You Are So You Can Be Who You Were Meant to Be** | Rachel Hollis

**Crazy Rich Asians** | Kevin Kwan

**Nine Perfect Strangers** | Liane Moriarty

**In Pieces: A Memoir** | Sally Field

**The Reckoning** | John Grisham

**Educated: A Memoir** | Tara Westover

**All We Ever Wanted** | Emily Giffin

**Where the Crawdads Sing** | Delia Owens

**A Spark of Light** | Jodi Picoult



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*I think a lot of people simply can't say the things that I say. They think it, but they won't say it, because they worry about what the neighbors might think. Or their family. Or their co-workers. A long time ago, I gave up caring what anyone thought. Plus I think it's important to speak out sometimes, even if it's uncomfortable to do so. I'm not saying that everything I comment on is important, but I do speak out about a lot of controversial topics and I try to speak for the ones who can't or won't speak for themselves. Fans of my work are always appreciative of the way I use my platform. They're always grateful that I'm saying something when no one else will. I've been told it gives them hope and it makes them feel like they aren't alone.*

**Do you have any memories about going to the library as a child and how books and stories helped to shape what you wanted to do in life?**

*I loved going to the library as a child! I grew up in Morristown, New Jersey, where our library was in the center of town. The library was really committed to community activities and I remember going there for different festivals and parades. I remember walking there after school and spending hours doing my homework and browsing the shelves. Okay, really I remember doing homework for about 20 minutes and browsing the shelves for the remainder of the time. I always found at least one book I could escape*



*The Central Resource Library let loose during this amazing event in September!*



*into. People are always asking me what's my favorite genre to read and I don't have one, and I think it's because I read whatever I grabbed off the shelves of that library! I read way above my age-range and no one stopped me like they did at school. And I learned so much from reading random books.*

**Why do you like to be involved in library-based programs and events like Library Lets Loose? Does it help you connect with readers in a different way?**

*I like to be involved with library programs, because it's a terrific way to connect with my own readers as well as find new ones. I also like to support libraries, because the*

*library has always been such a positive force in my own life. I grew up attending library events and I know how important it was to me as a young writer and reader to connect with like-minded people. I feel like so many think the library is "just" for books and so I'm always letting people know how vital they are to the community. I try to visit libraries in any city I visit. Some people want to see the sights, I want to see the library. I also love librarians. Librarians are a wealth of knowledge, they're advocates for the community, they're HUGE promoters of local authors, and they're fellow book-sniffers, my favorite kind of people.*

**As your children grow and parenting/life challenges change, have you found that your writing also changes? What lessons do you hope to instill in your children by leading by example and pursuing your writing goals?**

*When I first started writing, my kids were the “stars” of my writing. I wrote about all the funny, adorable, cute, exasperating stuff they did. They’re middle schoolers now and it would be obnoxious to still write about them, because they’re not so cute anymore. Also, middle school is an AWFUL point in your life and I don’t need to add to their misery by telling all their secrets. Because of this, I started writing fiction this year. This still gives me a creative outlet, but keeps them private. As far as lessons, I hope they’re learning, I hope they’re learning to go for their goals in life, no matter what age they are. I also hope they see that their dad is supportive of my dreams and my career. He encourages me to take risks and he’s never tried to limit me.*

**You write about parenting in a way that EVERY parent can relate to. Does writing help you handle the many stressors that come with parenting and approach day-to-day struggles differently?**

*YES. Writing about parenting was my form of therapy. I’d write it down and then I’d feel better. I’ve always processed stress that way, though. I wasn’t a journaler or a diary-keeper, but when something gets too stressful in my life, I write about it. I’d just never published it before I started blogging. I’m also someone who has always found the humor in stressful situations. I’m that annoying person cracking jokes while someone is trying to defuse a bomb or something.*

**What made you want to venture into different genres and write YA fiction with My Lane Life: Queen of the Misfits? How do you continue to challenge yourself as a writer?**

*Years ago when I first imagined myself as a writer, I never thought I’d be Erma Bombeck with f-bombs and yet, here we are. I always thought I’d write fiction. The ideas I’ve scribbled in notebooks over the years were all fiction. It seemed like a natural progression for me, because even I’m getting tired of reading stories*

*about myself and my family. I’m always looking for ways to challenge myself. In fact, when I’m done with this, I’ll start working on a pitch for a television show based on my books.*

**Putting yourself out there in writing can be scary; do you have any advice for women who have dreams of writing, performing, creating, etc., who are afraid of taking that big first step?**

*As Nike would say, Just Do It. I think the more you think about it, the scarier it seems. Stop thinking, start creating. Put aside your ego and your fears and do what comes naturally to you.*

**Is there a particular book that you’re the most proud of? If so, why?**

*Oh wow, why not ask me which one is my favorite child too? I have so many I’m proud of, but if I had to choose I’d choose My Lane Life: Queen of the Misfits. This book was inspired by my daughter and it was written with her (and the mantra “What Would Judy Blume Do?”) in mind. I want to empower young girls to accept their “weirdness” and “a lot-ness” and own their quirks and what makes them unique. I want them to stop worrying about changing to fit everyone’s expectations and instead to find the people who like them for who they are.*

**Do you have an up and coming project that you’d like to tell us about?**

*Yes. Every year I publish an anthology and my sixth one was released on September 28. It’s called You Do You. I’ve brought together over 35 female voices ranging in age from 12 to 63 to write essays, short stories, and poetry in a celebration of girl power. This is a book for anyone in middle school to middle age.*



## Let it Loose Highlights

### MakerSpace

The library's MakerSpace area showcased two impressive pieces, both of which were made possible through technology available to patrons.

*John Opsahl's Painting Robot* is a six axis CNC painter made from laser cut wood and electronic components that paints on canvas using a digital image as a reference; all wood pieces were cut using the laser cutter in the library's MakerSpace.

*Andy Wise's Drawing Robot* is a robotic drawing system built using 3D-printed components, a Raspberry Pi, fishing line, a hobby servo, stepper motors and a Magic Marker; components were printed using the 3D printer in MakerSpace.

### Main Stage/Literary Stage/Logan Room

Various performers and artists entertained the crowd in locations around the library including: *The Black Mariah Theatre*, *Jessica Paige*, *Toast to the Library with Katy Guillen & The Girls*; *Lady SINcerely*, *Jen Mann*, *Heart of America Shakespeare*; "More Than Just Books" Trivia, hosted by Zeb Rains.

### Gallery

The *Coloring it Bold* exhibit featured artwork by Kansas City women artists.



## Mark Your Calendars

A sample of upcoming events at Johnson County library branches:

### November 2

#### *Best of elementia Release Party*

Central Resource Library

5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

### November 4

#### *Writers Conference – New Kids Session*

Central Resource Library

1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

### November 9

#### *Local Music Live: The Natalie Bates Quartet*

Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center

6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

### November 20

#### *Let's Talk Turkey*

Antioch Library

2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

3:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.

# Branching out & Staff spotlight

## A Chat at the Central Resource Library

How does a book find its way to a Johnson County Library shelf? Most people never think about that, books just magically appearing somehow among the rows of fiction and nonfiction reads. The truth is, books find their way to library bookshelves due to Lacie Griffin, Collection Development Manager, and her team that oversees material collection for all 14 Johnson County Library branches.

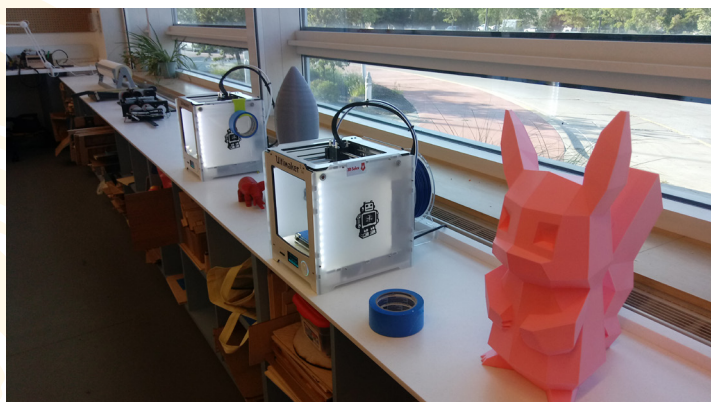
With a \$3.2 million annual budget, Griffin and her team develop the library's extensive collection by working with publishers, vendors and members of the community to select books that will be enjoyed by patrons. And, that's no easy task. When you think about how many books are published annually, the thought of narrowing down the selection to those that will be among the most read and popular with patrons is a huge undertaking. Add the selection of CDs, DVDs, electronic books and audiobooks to the mix, and the task becomes all the more challenging.

Even if certain books are requested by patrons, purchasing them might not be as easy as you think. Books published in another country, for example, can't be purchased directly and international audio and visual materials aren't necessarily compatible with our technology. Those hurdles, however, are ones that Griffin and her team are used to overcoming, their use of inter-library loan is always an option if a patron requests material that the library doesn't currently carry. Her team also keeps tabs on what's popular among readers by tracking check-outs, holds and popular authors, including local authors who often develop a loyal following and demand for book copies. Self-published books have their own journey to library shelves, which sometimes requires Griffin and her team to peruse more tailored author lists and reader-created website and blogs.

"Ours is a centralized process," adds Laura Hunt, Branch Manager of the Central Resource Library. Although the Johnson County Library system has used a centralized team to research, analyze and build the collections in each of its branches since the 1990s, it was far ahead of the game in terms of internal processes. The other major library systems



*Everyone knows that the Central Resource Library is a special place, but have you truly experienced all that it offers? Some of the most interesting features have nothing to do with books! Check out the art gallery and MakerSpace for creative inspiration.*



in the Kansas City area only converted to a centralized system within the past five to ten years, relying until that time on individual branches to manage their own collections.

It is clear that both Griffin and Hunt are proud of the Johnson County Library system and, specifically, the fact they can call the Central Resource Library their home base. Hunt may claim that her background is far from interesting, but you soon realize that's not the case, her prior work as a newspaper journalist and intern at Nickelodeon the perfect precursor to her current position. She considered her journalism job to be a great experience, but tired of the deadlines and stress. She used that experience, however, to figure out what she loved about the process and apply it to a different career. "I liked being involved in a democracy," she says. "I liked working to educate the public."

Working as a youth services librarian while going to library school, Hunt realized that she had found a way to blend her skills, interests and passion. "I was doing crafts and working with teens," she recalls. "I liked being part of something where everyone has access to information." More than anything, Hunt was inspired by the possibility of being able to help people stay informed while effecting change in their lives.

What makes the Central Resource Library so special? Griffin describes the library as a "safe space." Hunt agrees. "There's access with no judgment," she says. You can walk around the Central Resource Library and easily find things that set it apart from others – the local history resources, genealogy, free meeting rooms and MakerSpace areas all well-known features of the library that make it a popular destination for patrons near and far. Look a bit closer and you'll find even more, the green server room and recording studio helping creative souls polish their work, and the microfilm still available giving a bit of a nod to the libraries of years gone by.

"New people are surprised that MakerSpace is free," says Griffin. Hunt seconds that sentiment, still in awe of what's available as she walks through the space and points out 3D printers and laser technology that is free for anyone to use. And, with MakerSpace facilitators, patrons don't need to worry about working machines for the first time. There's always someone there to help.

Whether it's the branch's rotating art collection, events that draw hundreds of attendees, or a book store that offers great finds at can't-beat prices, it's hard to identify one thing that makes the Central Resource Library stand out from all others. "Our branch is considered a destination," Hunt says. "We have more of everything here." Griffin agrees, adding that the library's non-fiction collection alone is the same size as some branches' entire collections.

"This library is a well-oiled machine," Hunt observes, noting that its size and growth can sometimes be a challenge when you strive to work as cohesively and streamlined as possible. It's a challenge that Hunt looks forward to facing, however, as she applies her years of experience with the Johnson County Library system to her relatively new role as branch manager. "I like being in a place with so much activity," she says. "I'm near all the people making things happening. It's cool to be a part of all that."

# Patron's Point of View

## Mary-Lou Jaramillo: A Life Devoted to Giving Back and Making Change

Mary Lou Jaramillo believes in giving back. She doesn't just believe in it, she *lives* it, having devoted her life to organizations that promote and support change in the community. Currently on the board of the Kansas Leadership Center, a non-profit organization "committed to fostering leadership for stronger, healthier and more prosperous Kansas communities," Jaramillo is the former Executive Director of El Centro in Kansas City, Kansas and the Mattie Rhodes Center in Kansas City, Missouri. She made such an impact during her time at El Centro that they created a Mary Lou Jaramillo Scholarship Fund when she retired as CEO/President in 2013.

Jaramillo's list of civic contributions is long, serving as a consultant to the Olathe Latino Coalition and board member of the Francis Family Foundation in Kansas City, among other organizations. One group in particular, however, is close to her heart and fuels her passion for helping others realize their potential.

Three years ago, Jaramillo co-founded Johnson County Latina Leadership Network with her friend,

Mary Estrada. Because the Latina population is growing in Johnson County, they wanted to find a way to bring the community together.

"We wanted to find a way to be connected and promote leadership and civil engagement," she explains. The network posts information on its Facebook page for the benefit of its growing group of followers. "We encourage them to be engaged civically," Jaramillo says. For some, that means involvement in their local PTA, engaging in volunteer activities, or taking their civic involvement to the next level.

The Network occasionally hosts guest speakers at the Johnson County Library's Oak Park branch to help share information with members and encourage communication. Their current goal is to remind everyone to register to vote and to encourage their families, friends and neighbors to get to the voting booths on election day.

Notably, in September, the Johnson County Board of Commissioners issued a proclamation recognizing



*Gathering to celebrate and receive the National Hispanic Heritage Month proclamation from the Johnson County Board of Commissioners.*

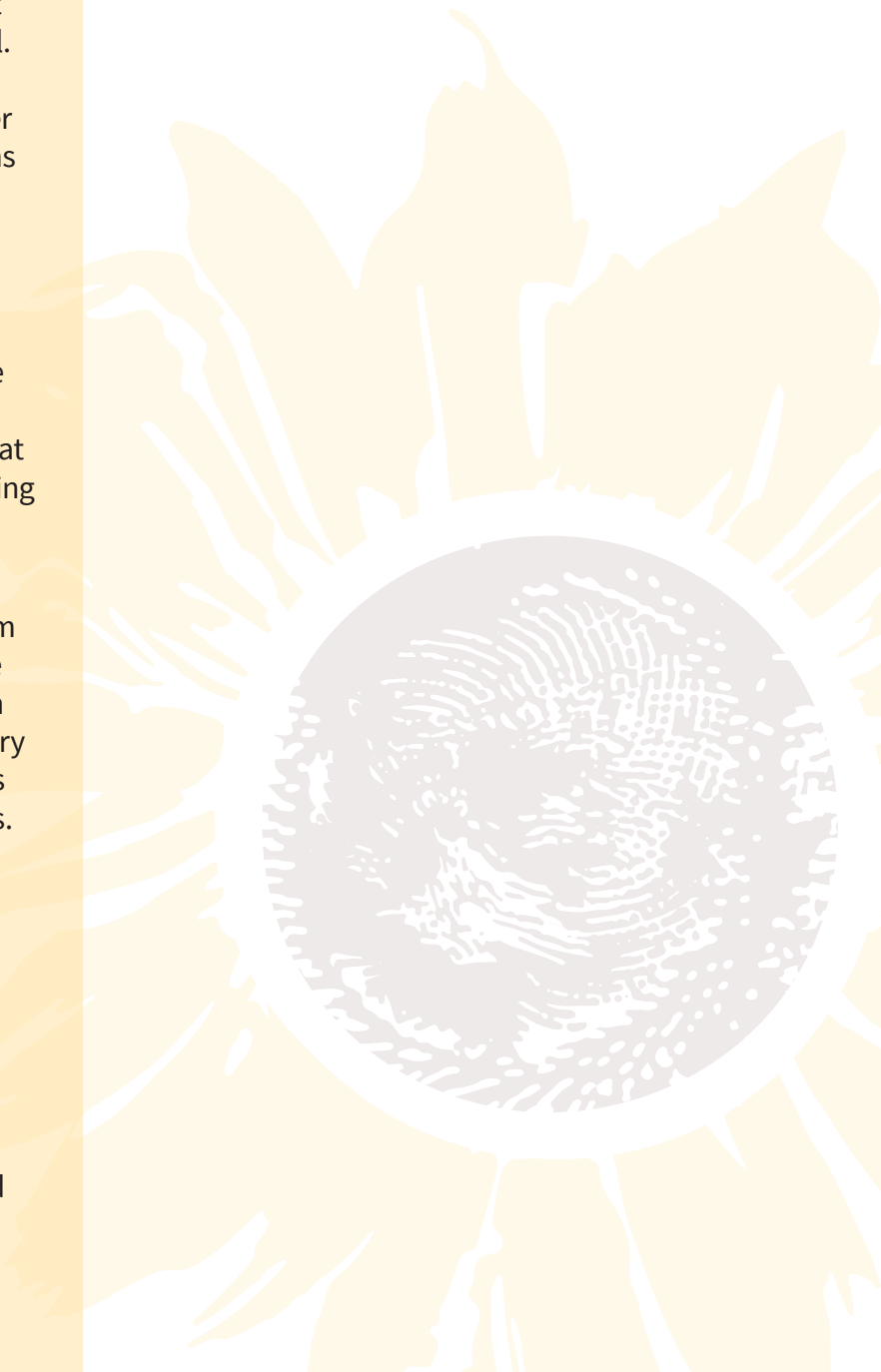
National Hispanic Heritage Month, which will run from September 15th to October 15th. One of the Johnson County Latina Network's members, Connie Espinoza Springfield, Assistant Principal at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, received the proclamation. Eight area high school students also attended, and Jaramillo was happy to see young people getting involved. "It was an example of the possibilities that our group can mobilize in the future," Jaramillo says.

The passion that Jaramillo brings to her work with the Network is one that she applies to everything she does, her work with the leadership center one that is focused on helping people realize their potential. "It's about growing civil leadership in the state of Kansas," Jaramillo explains. "The leadership center has different offerings for individuals, organizations and businesses to take advantage of, their courses all about developing leadership. The center really believes that leadership is an activity and not a position," she says.

One of the center's courses – Your Leadership Edge – was offered in Johnson County and Wyandotte County in 2018 and Jaramillo is happy to report that they will be offered again in 2019. "It's about building individual competencies for civic engagement or organizational improvement," she says.

Jaramillo's work is really not much different from the mission of the Johnson County Library – she strives to educate, inform and support people in her community. "From my perspective, the library is a very democratic, safe space to go for curious people who want to continue learning," she says. "Library staff are so willing and helpful to try to satisfy the customer's curiosities or direct them where to find materials."

As for what Jaramillo is reading right now, her coffee table has a mix of *Time* Magazines, the Leadership Center's journals and an autobiography of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. It seems, therefore, that even in her downtime, Jaramillo is learning about the world around her and finding ways to help as many people as possible.





# The Month in Review

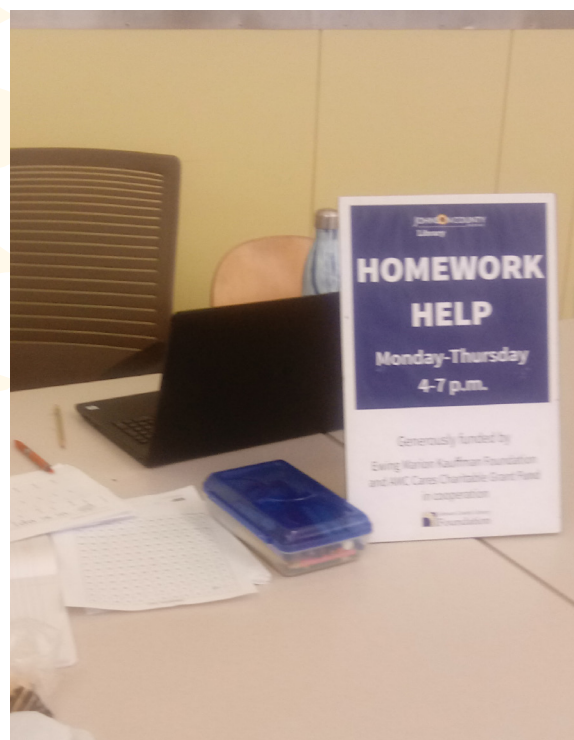


**Above:** Who doesn't love a good board game? Stop by the Antioch Library and you'll find eager game enthusiasts during Table Top Game Night.

**Top Right:** Do you love a good debate? Well, if you like watching one, hopefully you swung by the Central Resource Library for its Kansas Gubernatorial Debate Watch party on September 5th.



**Above:** Did you know that there are resources at the Central Resource Library to help with genealogy? And, if you have any questions, there are genealogy experts there to help.



**Above:** Students stop by the Central Resource Library to get a little extra help with their school work during "Homework Help" hours.

# Taking a closer look



It's funny that we think of libraries as quiet demure places where we are shushed by dusty, bun-balancing, bespectacled women. The truth is libraries are raucous clubhouses for free speech, controversy and community. Librarians have stood up to the Patriot Act, sat down with noisy toddlers and reached out to illiterate adults. Libraries can never be shushed.

Paula Poundstone

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