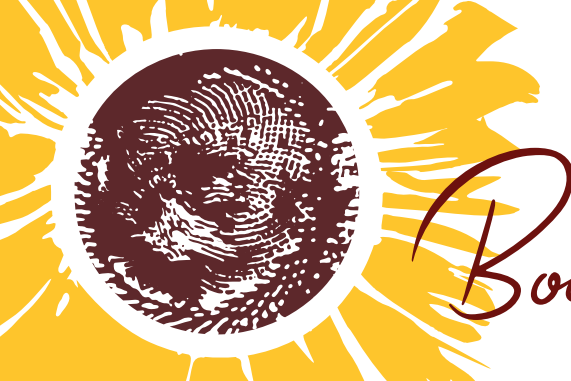


Book Report



A HEART FOR THE HOMELESS

An Interview with Sharon Rodriguez

Photographer Sharon Rodriguez shines a light on the homeless population in Johnson County. Her works are currently on display in the gallery of Central Resource Library.

Some Johnson Countians think the homeless don't exist here. But Sharon Rodriguez's exhibit at Central Resource Library in February aimed to show that the homeless exist even in the middle- to upper-income suburbs.

They live in parks, in woods, on streets and anywhere else a person without a home could camp or shelter from rain, snow and heat.

Sharon says suburbanites often have a "not in my backyard" attitude toward the homeless. But she tells them, "They're already in your backyard. They're everywhere."

One day on a walking trail, Sharon saw a homeless man and woman she sensed were having a problem. She approached and asked if she could help. The woman began to cry. She said no one else had spoken with them in all the time they had been there.

"The homeless are human beings just like anyone else," she said. "They have the same needs and emotions. I don't give them money, but sometimes I give them food or clothing. I ask them to tell me their stories."

Sharon records the stories in handwriting and makes black-and-white photographs of the storytellers. She has featured them in two books, "Homeless Not Invisible" in

2017 and "Homeless, With Honor" in 2018. You can also see her work on her website, sharonrodriguezphotography.com

Sharon feels passionate about her work and can get up in anyone's face who talks disparagingly about poor or homeless people. At a civic club meeting, a man said he was renovating an apartment complex "to get rid of the unsavory." She spoke to him so forcefully about his lack of respect that he ended up giving her a donation for her work. She used the money to buy digital cameras for homeless people to use to record their lives and plans to feature their photos in a future exhibition.

The work Sharon does now is a world away from her previous jobs as an IT consultant. Her artistry evolved after 2007, when she was unable to find work in the crippled economy. A mother of three, grandmother of 10 and great-grandmother of 10, she is happy to spend time with her family and to continue her heartfelt work with the homeless.

Through Sharon's stories and photos, viewers have a window into the experiences of homeless people. Other people may shy away from the conversations Sharon has, but she feels no fear, only compassion and a desire to make visible the "invisible" homeless in all their humanity.

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February 2019

BRANCHING OUT

Corinth Library

Patrons of Corinth Library know the process of returning books very well. You pull open the deposit drawer on the outside of the building, place your book inside and close the drawer. From there, your book falls into a pile of other returned books inside. Then library employees sort and replace the books on the shelves.

That's the way it's always been. But now, modern technology is making the process much more efficient.

A sleek-looking return slot replaces the pull-down drawer by the entrance. When you feed in a book, it lands on a conveyor belt inside that starts moving when it detects a book. The book is checked in and quickly removed from the patron's account before it is deposited in one of several bins, depending on its type. On the conveyor belt, each book's RFID tag is scanned. The tag links the item with a record that says what the item is and where it goes. For example, when an RFID tag tells the computer it's an Adult Fiction

book, it goes to bin number two. Finally, library employees return the sorted books to the shelves.



With more than 100,000 books in Corinth's collection, automated sorting saves a great deal of employees' time. The sorter swiftly processes a volume of books that would take employees hours to sort by hand. That also means the books can be back on the shelves more quickly.

Amy Barclay, Corinth Branch Manager, said the sorter frees up employees to do more patron-focused activities: helping patrons find a new book, use the computers or locate useful resources.

The library acquired the Tech Logic sorter to better serve Corinth's large community of patrons. The machinery was delivered on a flatbed truck, and clearing space to install the large, complex machine was a challenge.

Amy Barclay, Branch Manager, is an experienced manager who's new to Corinth as of January 7, 2019. She previously was a Branch Manager at the Mid-Continent library system. She began her new job just as the sorter installation was being planned. The library was closed from February 6 through February 11 while the work was completed. Staff was trained

and the sorter was ready for use on February 14. Amy said Corinth's community of readers was patient and supportive, knowing the change would improve the library's quality of service to patrons.

Corinth Library provides services and activities for patrons of all ages. There are storytimes for babies, toddlers and preschoolers. For older kids, there's Read to a Dog, which allows kids to practice their reading-out-loud skills with a well-trained therapy dog as the audience.

The library's lower level is a large children's space where there are books, DVDs, computers and well-lit study areas. Glass cases hold children's personal collections of toys, dolls, colorful erasers or



whatever else they like to collect.

For adults, Corinth Library hosts many different kinds of programs. One is legislative coffees, where patrons can get to know their local elected officials. Another is An Edible Discussion, where attendees share a potluck meal while they learn from community chefs and experts about various food genres and how to use them in recipes.

With its emphasis on serving all types of patrons, Corinth Library is a vital part of the Prairie Village community – and it's clear that the community loves and appreciates all the ways it touches their lives.



TOP 10 HOLDS



FEBRUARY 2019

- 746 Where the Crawdads Sing**
Delia Owens
- 664 Becoming**
Michelle Obama
- 615 Nine Perfect Strangers**
Liane Moriarty
- 562 Educated: A Memoir**
Tara Westover
- 395 The Reckoning**
John Grisham
- 289 Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth**
Sarah Smarsh
- 275 The Silent Patient**
Alex Michaelides
- 274 The Clockmaker's Daughter**
Kate Morton
- 271 The Tattooist of Auschwitz**
Heather Morris
- 264 The Library Book**
Susan Orlean

PATRON FOCUS

Oli Ray



When Oli Ray was a junior at Olathe High School, Kate McNair, the Teen Services Coordinating Librarian, came to speak there. She spoke about *elementia*, the library's creative magazine published by teens. It's described as "a literary arts magazine published to represent and uplift young adults." As a budding writer, Oli was intrigued.

When he was a senior, Oli interned at the Central Resource Library as an editor and designer for issue 15. In that role, he was pleased to discover what a wide array of resources the library offered. He especially appreciated the Maker Space, where patrons can use digital design software, a recording studio, video hardware and software, 3D printers, laser cutters and more. That's where Oli created *elementia* videos that he posted on the library's YouTube channel.

"The Maker Space enabled me to create higher-quality film projects," says Oli. "The library is an undervalued resource I'd encourage everyone to learn about and appreciate."

Kate McNair says, "Oli brought his experience in spoken word poetry and videography to the table to help us best represent our performances online. He jumped at every opportunity to make *elementia* bigger and better, contributing his time and talents to select writing for publication and design the issue."

She adds, "Oli's energy, enthusiasm and respect for the work of others was contagious and has left a lasting impact on our editorial committee and the *elementia* community."

Since the magazine's debut in 2005, *elementia* has published 1,000 pieces of writing and art from 730 creative young adults in 15 issues. Young adults from all over the Kansas City Metro area, several states, England, Malaysia, and Africa have been featured in its pages.

"I was fortunate to intern at the library and meet the *elementia* staff and the library personnel," Oli says. "I learned a lot and made a lot of friends. It opened a lot of opportunities for me."

When Oli came out as transgender in high school in Olathe, he faced difficulties with some students. But when he came to the library, he found support and acceptance. And, of course, the chance to learn new creative skills.

Now, Oli is majoring in writing and minoring in film at the Pratt Institute in New York, which has a diversity policy and extensive LGBTQ resources for students.

"Most everything is much better at Pratt," Oli says.



The cover of the Best of Elementia, an anthology of writing and art from the first 15 issues of Johnson County Library's teen literary arts magazine.



Oli Ray, a core member of the team that produced *elementia*'s issue xv, helped expand the magazine into the audiovisual realm.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

The Renaissance Man of Antioch Library: Meet Dylan Reiter

Dylan Reiter is a man of many facets. A bass player with three bands who has traveled nationally and internationally. A trombone and tuba player. Mr. Fixit for issues with Mac and PC tablets and laptops. Instructor in the use of Android and Apple cellphones. And there's more. But his official title at Antioch Library is Information Specialist, or IS.

Don't let Dylan's youthful looks and energy fool you – he's no newcomer. He has been working in public libraries for 20 years. Starting as a part-time page at Olathe's downtown library while he was in college, he worked his way up to clerk, library assistant, then page supervisor at Olathe Public Library's Indian Creek branch before beginning work with Johnson County Library. For the last two years, he's been an IS at JCL's Antioch branch.

During that time, he's worked with staff to offer new programs that provide vital information to library patrons. Like free help with digital proficiency. So, if you don't know how to make a PDF on your laptop, download an app for your cellphone or print a document, Dylan and the other staff are happy to help. Just make a reservation for a 30-minute one-on-one consultation. And if you don't get it the first time, you can come back until you're a pro.

Dylan works to make the library a community resource for area residents, many middle- or lower-income and lacking jobs or college educations. Inside Antioch Library's main entrance, you'll see one of JCL's outreach projects: a big Career & Finance board where you can pick up flyers listing current job postings, upcoming career fairs and free materials on personal finance.

And as a member of the Career & Finance Committee, Dylan helps coordinate programming with community partners to help job-seekers with resumes, online job resources, electronic applications,



“ Dylan works to make the library a community resource for area residents ”

interview skills and more. One recent partnership with the Society of Human Resources Managers of Johnson County brought HR professionals and company managers to Antioch to review resumes one-on-one. A follow-up workshop, “So You Think You Can Interview?” will be offered at the Monticello branch in April, where job-seekers can receive feedback to improve their interviewing skills.

All of this is quite different from the music career Dylan originally had in mind. As a boy, he and his older brother sang in the Tulsa Boy Singers. Later, he switched to playing trombone, then tuba, followed by

electric bass. Then he began studying music education at Mid-America Nazarene University. But midway through his studies, he left school to play music and work to pay off his student loans.

He's still playing. Last April, Dylan traveled to France to play bass with the Brandon Miller Band. He's very busy with both music and library careers, but he says it's definitely worth it.

Asked how he likes working for Johnson County Library, he says, “I love it every day, and even when things come up that could be tough to handle, I'm confident I can either do it myself or find someone who can. This is the best job I've ever had.”

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Homeschool Meetup: Nature and Art Inspire

On a gray and rainy February day, bright colors and lively imaginations were at play at Cedar Roe Library's Homeschool Meetup, "Nature and Art," presented by Karen Gerety-Foulks, curator of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art.

Karen brought Magic Clay and markers to use for sculpting and sparked the children's creative imaginations with photos and art featuring plants and animals. As they pushed, patted and pulled the clay, their ideas took form. Finally, they added vivid colors with markers.



A colorful creation.



Two young patrons create with clay.

The unique artworks included multi-colored snails, an orange-striped cat, a turtle and a tropical island with a palm tree.

As an Olathe mom's third- and fourth-grade sons eagerly joined the group of children in the meetup room, she said, "I like this because it's a chance for them to see that there are other homeschooled kids like them. And it gives them a chance to learn independently and ask questions."

Story Slam

On the third Tuesday evening of each month, Central Resource Library hosts Now Presenting, a series of arts and culture related events. On February 20, the event was a "Story Slam," where several storytellers told true-life tales to an audience of about 20.

Mike told of a co-worker's comical obsession with coming Y2K disasters. Though skeptical at first, he eventually purchased mass quantities of bottled water and fruit cocktail. After Y2K came without incident, he was stuck with a two-year supply, wondering, why fruit cocktail?



A teacher shared a funny, very animated description of the machinery in a hot dog factory where she worked during high school and how she once got her arm stuck in a machine.

The March 19 Now Presenting event is "Arts in Prison," featuring poetry of Lansing inmates and former inmates. On April 16, it will be "Veterans Reader Theater," readings of veterans' and their families' accounts of military life from boot camp to service to life afterward.

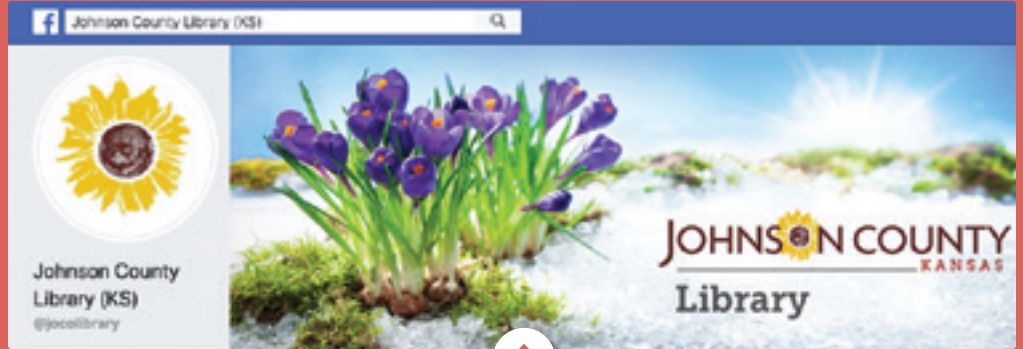


TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights



Our **web content team** capitalized on the **Marie Kondo trend** with this post, that received almost **100k reactions**.



We are **just a couple of weeks away** from hitting **10k page likes** on Facebook!



We **had a little fun** with one of the **snowstorm forecasts** and how many **books you should check out**.



Race Project KC has been generating lots of **great content** from **students and teachers**. Learn more about **Race Project KC**, raceprojectkc.com.



Our **Lenexa City Center Library** opening announcement received **lots of love**.



Book Report

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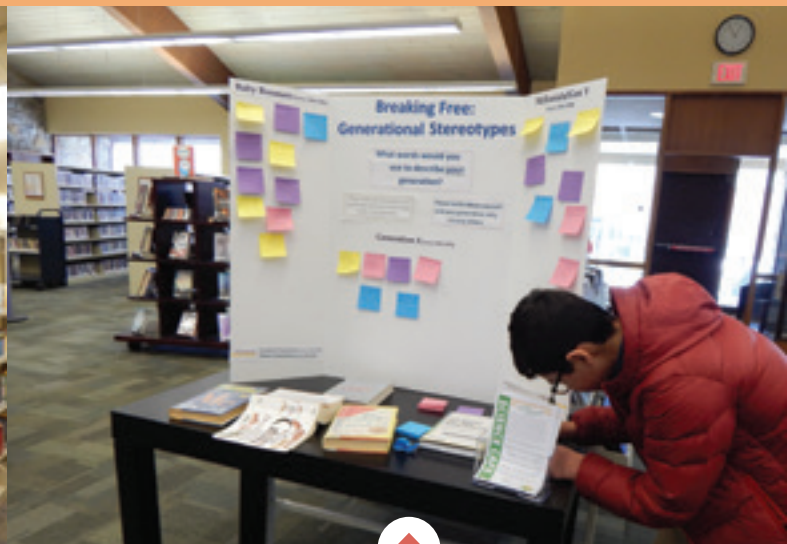
Month in Review February 2019



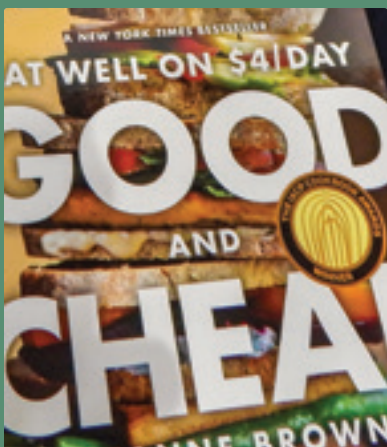
Patrons recently visited Antioch Library for the *Renovate Your Resume* program where members of the Society for Human Resource Management of Johnson County shared tips on how to write a resume that will stand out.



A book display at Corinth Library celebrating Black History month.



Corinth Library recently asked patrons to describe their generation in their own words.



NEXT ISSUE

-  **Top 10 Holds:** March 2019

-  **Staff Spotlight:** Lacie Griffin, Collection Development Manager

-  **Event:** Meet the author Leanne Brown

-  **Patron Focus:** Julie Steiner

-  **Branching Out:** Blue Valley Library

JOHNSON COUNTY
KANSAS

Library

BOOK REPORT

A monthly publication for government officials and residents of Johnson County

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