



Book Report

SEPTEMBER 2020  VOLUME XIX

Promoting and Sustaining Summer Reading During Pandemic

Johnson County Library puts a high priority on keeping kids and families reading during the summer, and that commitment has remained strong despite the unprecedented challenges of summer 2020. The reading and book club activities that normally occur in Libraries moved online because of the Coronavirus pandemic, and book distribution went forward thanks to wonderful community partners.

It's been an adjustment, but the activities kept patrons engaged and the book distribution became an impressive outreach and model for the future. Melanie Fuemmeler, elementary coordinating librarian, praises the staff for willingly re-imagining what summer reading services could be. "It has been through the work of our staff and really just their commitment to making sure the kids of Johnson County have

that access to literacy," Fuemmeler said. "It was staying true to our mission and realizing the work had to be different. It was all hands on deck for sure."

One popular program was Folklore Storytime for elementary school kids, highlighting beloved stories from around the world. These occurred weekly and had from 20-30 views each time. Then there were the STEAM creation classes (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math), with science-oriented books and creative activities. **See related article** The Library also offered online book clubs for kids, teens and English Language learners. The kids and teen book clubs each had two dozen participants and a waiting list. The Adelante! Read! book club had 14 participants, both native Spanish speakers and kids learning Spanish. "We sent all registrants four books and gave them the schedule," Fuemmeler said. "The kids really got into it. They loved getting four books that they normally would've been required to check out."

Fuemmeler said that even online, participants forged personal connections over time. "Having that consistent audience each time built community that I don't think we really anticipated, but we got to watch it develop," she said.

The biggest lesson learned was that online programming worked best when it required active participation, rather than just sitting and watching a speaker or performance. "Our programs that had the most consistent audience were ones where community was built and it wasn't passive," Fuemmeler said. "They were doing something on the other end."

The annual summer book distribution was another challenge since Library branches



Summer Reading participants from the Gardner-Edgerton school district

were not fully open. Twenty-one community partners such as Catholic Charities, De Soto Rotary, schools and businesses stepped up to distribute over 9,000 books at various locations. "It was an incredible outreach effort," Fuemmeler said, adding that people who don't usually visit the Libraries were helped. "We have gotten books to families that normally would have not gotten books, because of these organizations."

One distribution spot was the new Merriam community center. As people visited, they were invited to peruse the book selections. Recreation Coordinator Ingrid Berg loved seeing their smiles when they noticed the table with brand new books available. Each family would take a few items and go home happy. "People were just ecstatic about being able to take books home for free," she said. "Especially this summer when there's not a ton to do." She praised the Library staff for making several trips to provide more than 1,600 books at the site. "People are super excited," she said. "Families go home and have a nice reading afternoon."

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BRANCHING OUT

Oak Park Now Teaming with Central Resource Library

Oak Park Library has been a much loved neighborhood branch that marks its 50th anniversary later this year.

On July 26, Oak Park Library also launched a new chapter in its history by starting a work group relationship with Central Resource Library. The two branches will share staff and resources in ways that Library officials hope will benefit both facilities.

This same branch partnering has worked well for Monticello and De Soto, and for Shawnee and Cedar Roe, according to Oak Park assistant branch managers Lisa Jordan and Ashley Whitham, who each previously worked at Monticello.

“It’s helpful for staff to get to know two different buildings and the patronage at both. It helps expand their horizons and helps them learn more about the system,” Whitham said.

Jordan noted that several people had called in sick one day recently at Central. Oak Park, at 9500 Bluejacket St., had available staff, so they were able to send reinforcements to Central, just a few miles north at 9875 W. 87th Street.

“Combining the staff, now we have an extra big staff and so we can help each other out very easily in that way,” Jordan said.

Staff members are getting to know each other and to know both buildings.



Assistant Branch Managers Ashley Whitham (L) and Lisa Jordan (R) at Oak Park

“Our vision as we move forward would be to have staff working at both buildings, and having one staff for Central and Oak Park and that they would move back and forth,” Jordan said. “We’ve got to get everybody feeling like they’re at home both places.”

The timing was right for the merger, since Oak Park Branch Manager Roxanne Belcher retired July 23 after a long career with Johnson County Library. Jared Harper was appointed branch manager of the combined Central/Oak Park team. The work group will have four assistant branch managers including Jordan and Whitham.

Jordan has been an assistant branch manager at Central since February and was previously part of the team that opened Monticello in 2018.

Whitham was a clerk at Monticello and has been an Oak Park assistant branch manager since February. She said it’s clear Oak Park is valued by the surrounding neighborhoods. The branch had more than 197,000 visits in 2018.

“The neighborhood cares very deeply for this branch,” she said. “We do get a lot of walkers.”

It is also a primary location for Johnson County Library’s Spanish collection, and prior to this year’s Coronavirus pandemic hosted popular English Language Learner programming for adults, which Library officials hope will resume when it’s safe.

Oak Park is also known for its Storytimes, with beloved youth information specialists Angelica Reiff and Becky Carleton. While in-person programming is suspended, they offer Storytime programming online.

Oak Park, originally named the Southwest Library, opened Nov. 3, 1970, as Overland Park subdivisions and retail replaced cornfields along 95th Street. The building was expanded in 1982 and has a large children’s collection and welcoming Storytime space.

The facility is in good shape but will get some exterior refreshing this fall, including new parking lot striping and landscape clearing.

Both Jordan and Whitham see the potential for a great partnership between Oak Park and Central.

“It’s always exciting,” Jordan said, “to bring branches together and teams together and do good work together.”

TOP HOLDS

SEPTEMBER 2020

- The Guest List **Lucy Foley**
- The Vanishing Half **Brit Bennett**
- Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World’s Most Dangerous Man **Mary L. Trump**
- White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism **Robin J. DiAngelo**
- 28 Summers **Elin Hilderbrand**
- Untamed **Glennon Doyle**
- Big Summer **Jennifer Weiner**
- Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents **Isabel Wilkerson**
- The Silent Patient **Alex Michaelides**
- The Order **Daniel Silva**
- All the Devils are Here **Louise Penny**

PATRON OF THE MONTH

Family Finds Creative Outlet with Summer Reading Programs

Summer 2020 posed many obstacles for Johnson County parents trying to keep kids engaged and entertained in the midst of a pandemic. That's why Kristin Massoth of Prairie Village was pleased to find worthwhile online summer programming for her two daughters, Aubrey and Kate, through Johnson County Library.

In a normal busy summer, Aubrey would play softball and both girls would have camp, both of which weren't available in 2020. But they've also participated in the Library's summer reading program in the past, so Kristin watched for emails and Facebook updates about summer Library offerings. "We were interested in it because of having extra free time," Massoth shared.

She was particularly excited to get a notice that the Library was offering Young Rembrandts classes online, for free, to teach school-aged children drawing. Last summer, the girls had taken some in-person Young Rembrandts classes, which charged a fee. "When I saw that I thought, 'Oh, wow. This is so cool to have that opportunity to take that for free,'" Massoth said.

She connected her phone to the television and the girls could sit at the coffee table and draw during the hour-long lessons. Aubrey, who turns 12 on September 8 and is a 6th grader at John Paul II Catholic School, loves art and really enjoyed the classes, which had a "Fantasy Forest" theme. "We drew a sprite, a tree house and other stuff like that," Aubrey recalled, saying she was able to follow along with the teacher and learned a lot. "I really liked it. I probably wouldn't have been able to draw those things on my own."

Kate, 9, who is in 3rd grade at John Paul II, also had fun. "I did trees and an elf and a bear," she said.

Because that worked out well, Massoth registered her daughters for other online Library programs that were designed to motivate children's creativity and curiosity. Aubrey got inspired by the "Imagine Your

Story" summer folklore reading theme and writing workshop, and wrote her own fairy tale about a girl and a witch. Both girls entered the Library's poster contest.

They also participated in two STEAM creations classes (Science, technology, engineering, arts and math). One class featured a book about flowers, and a flower-making activity with tissue paper. "I learned how to make beautiful flowers," Aubrey said. "It was a fun craft."

They read a book about density and explored the scientific principle in action by layering honey, dish soap, colored water, colored rubbing alcohol and vegetable oil in a container. "It had all these different layers and it looked really cool," Kate recalled.

Aubrey gave thumbs up to the Library's programs and said, "I thought they were a great use of my time." She's now writing her own chapter book.

Kristen Reese, a Lenexa City Center youth information specialist who helped moderate some of the STEAM classes, said the Library learned that audience participation in fun and imaginative projects was key to their



Virtual Summer Reading participants Aubrey (L) and Kate (R) Massoth

success. "The kids were really engaged," she said. "They were really excited to share their end product."

That was Kristin Massoth's assessment. "I felt like the summer reading program was a really great thing," she said. "It provided a lot of enrichment for our kids. I was really appreciative that they planned so much, keeping COVID in mind."



A sample of Aubrey and Kate's folklore-themed artwork

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Helping Patrons find treasured materials through ILL is “like Christmas”

Looking for a Darth Vader cake pan? Or a medical school model ear? Or an academic journal article or rare book or anthology? Johnson County Library might be able to help, through the Interlibrary Loan program (ILL), currently led by Abby Minard.

It’s that treasure hunt for out-of-the-ordinary materials that Minard loves about the job. She’s been involved with interlibrary loan services for the past 13 years, first in Springfield, MO, and then at Johnson County Library since November 2016. “It’s a service in which Libraries throughout the world can borrow and lend books and materials to each other,” Minard explained.

Johnson County Library has a large and diverse collection that it owns. But on top of that, Minard says, interlibrary loan is a wonderful enhancement to the collection. Johnson County Library has connections to public and university Libraries internationally that help provide access to incredible documents, books and other materials. “I just love getting things for patrons that they can’t find,” Minard said. “Supplementing the collection. Knowing it doesn’t end with just us—we can look elsewhere.”

Sometimes items can’t be found or aren’t available for loan, but the team tries valiantly to satisfy requests. “It’s exciting especially when it’s something hard to find and we get it in,” Minard said. “It’s like Christmas.”

The service is available to Johnson County residents, and they can get an idea of what is available through the WorldCat FirstSearch catalog on the Library website. The most unusual requests Minard could recall in recent years were the Darth Vader cake pan and the model ear, but they get lots of requests for interesting books and DVDs.

Sometimes the requests for articles, documents or microfilm require a fair amount of detective work. “We call

historical societies and see if we’re able to get something in,” she said. “The reference staff, the Librarians and information specialist staff are a big help. They are the ones to take the requests in and put that to us.”

In normal times, the Library borrows about 1,600 items per month for its own patrons and lends out about 1,700 items a month to other Libraries. They’ve handled requests with Denmark, Turkey, Thailand, Australia and other far-flung places. One of their most frequent and rewarding collaborations is with Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom.

Minard has been leading the interlibrary loan team since mid-March, when ILL Librarian Kari Sime retired right before the Coronavirus struck. That position is now frozen but Minard is

doing the work and is well-experienced for the job demands, making sure the department runs smoothly. She supervises two other full-time and two part-time staffers who handle the borrowing and lending requests. She also oversees seven volunteers who help process and return borrowed materials that come back in to the lending Libraries. The pandemic shut down borrowing and lending for a time, but those services have resumed and the pace is increasing. “My team is amazing and I would not be able to do all of this without them,” Minard emphasized. “We are like a well-oiled machine.”

Patrons are enormously appreciative. “Everybody loves ILL,” Minard said. “They realize we can’t buy everything. They’re thankful they can get it in other ways.”



Library Support Clerk Abby Minard

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Donations at Pine Ridge Sorting Center

One of the primary tasks of the Friends of Johnson County Library is taking donated, gently-used books and DVDs and reselling them to raise money to support Library services. In 2019, Friends of JCL took in about 300,000 donated items at Library branches and at the organization's Sorting Center in the Pine Ridge Business Park in Lenexa. But the community spread of Coronavirus required a new approach, because it wasn't practical or safe to have people randomly coming into the Sorting Center or to the branches to drop off big boxes of books.



To address this concern but still take advantage of generous community donations, Friends of JCL Operations Manager Shanta Dickerson, with help from another staffer and some wonderful volunteers, has conducted several donation events on specified Thursday evenings outside the Sorting Center at 8279 Melrose Dr. They had a steady stream of donors on the evenings of June 25 and August 6, with more events planned in September and possibly October. It's been an efficient, effective way to deal with the public and has been well received.

Two staffers and seven volunteers were on hand from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on June 25 and took in about 12,000 items



from about 50 vehicles. Materials were quarantined at the Sorting Center for 72 hours as they are at the Library. "It was a great team of volunteers and we got everything stacked up all nice and tight and it sat," Dickerson recalled. "We knew we would have a pretty big Monday team, and I could unleash the Monday crew on this pile."

Dickerson currently supervises a group of about 30 regular volunteers at the Sorting Center. She said one nice aspect of these Thursday events is they have drawn in new, eager volunteers who can't make a long-term commitment.

For the Aug. 6 event, held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., helpers took in about 6,500 items from 30 to 40 donors. The feedback was especially positive. One man showed up Aug. 6 with a U-Haul and 41 boxes, and later emailed Dickerson, "Shanta, the helpers were great!"

Another donor provided books from a closed church and emailed, "What a pleasant surprise to drive up and be greeted by so many helpful volunteers with dollies and carts and lots of smiles." He added, "This service, to me, is an example of adaptive leadership. We value books as well we should but our communication and educational contexts are changing, and finding new ways to recirculate or recycle old treasures is a great example for the rest of us in all other professions."

Dickerson said that's one of the most rewarding aspects of her work. She often hears heartwarming stories from people whose loved ones have passed away but who had been avid readers and Library patrons. She said families are relieved their cherished books can go to good homes and benefit the Library, and they trust Friends of Johnson County Library to make that happen. The vast majority of those items are resold, she said. "People are so glad their books are going to help the library."

Dickerson continues to work on convenient ways for people to donate during the pandemic, like the Thursday evening events. For more information, people can leave a message at the Sorting Center, 913-492-4791, or email sdickerson@friendsofjcl.org.



TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights

As you can see by the posts below, the Johnson County library system continues to thrive even in these difficult times! **Thank you for your support!** Click the captions to view full posts online!



Johnson Co. Library
@jocolibrary



We have stacks of books just waiting to be sent to you for our Online Book Group! Sign up for a time and date that you like, and we'll set aside a free book for you to pick up at the library of your convenience.



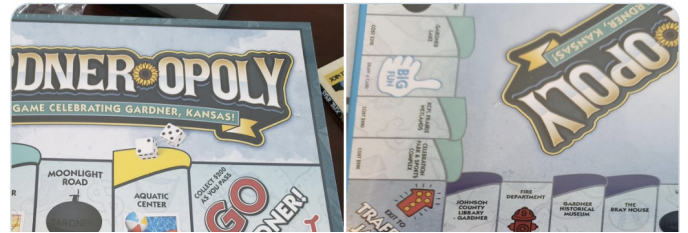
Books waiting for book club! 200+ engagements



Johnson Co. Library
@jocolibrary



One of our librarians just got the board game "Gardneropoly" and it turns out you can buy the Johnson County Library-Gardner for the low low price of \$270!



Gardner-opoly 150 engagements



Calling all kids!

American kids love to read, and this Book Club helps American kids read more. American Girl offers many character stories exploring historical perspectives from a girl's point of view. Join this group to read and craft with your American Girl and some new friends.

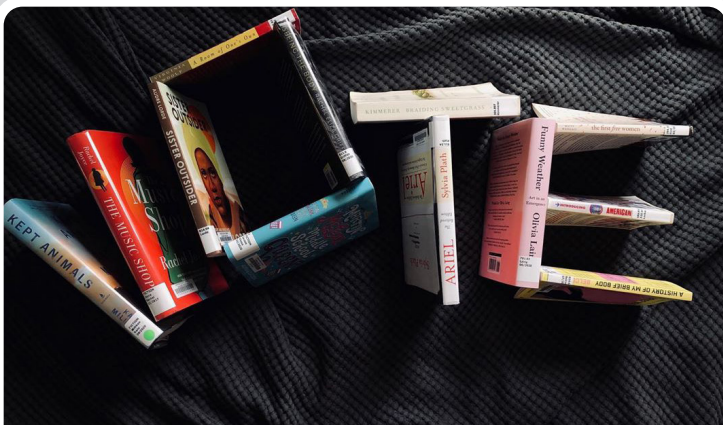
Register by Sept 2 and have the books we'll read during this four-session program series mailed to you. ... [See More](#)

American Girl Book Club 3k reach

Join us in celebrating the
release of *Elementia* Issue 17
at this year's
Virtual Reception
Keynote and
poetry reading
by acclaimed poet
Rudy Francisco!
Poetry readings and art
by teen contributors!



elementia Reception 2.5k reach



Vote 100 likes



Walk and Read 70 likes



Book Report

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Month in Review August 2020



A first-time voter celebrates after casting her ballot at Central Resource Library on August 4. The Central, Blue Valley and Oak Park branches served as polling places for the Kansas primary election.



Summer Reading ended with a bang on August 8 with an End-of-Summer Party, an all-day virtual event featuring games, crafts, music and a YA author panel. Summer Reading contest winners also were announced, including 12 year old Evie Hanne's Imagine Your Story poster.



Johnson County Government created and shared a video about how the Library has adapted during the pandemic. Narrated by Commissioner Janeé Hanzlick, the Library's liaison with the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners, the video features staff and stories from across the Library system.

Meet Author Emily Suvada

"Suvada's debut novel balances characterization and action with an intensity that readers of dystopian fantasy will find infectious." -- VOYA

"Suvada's scary, action-packed debut novel barely takes a breath, and its exploration of what makes us human goes well below the surface." -- Publishers Weekly

"I was thrilled; I was shocked; I have so many questions. I want to know what happens next." -- NPR



Celebrated YA author Emily Suvada held a virtual discussion with the Young Adult Literary Council (YALC) on August 17. Local teens served as moderators for the event, which gave attendees an inside look at her writing process for books like her science fiction thriller trilogy, *This Mortal Coil*.







elementia, Johnson County Library's teen literary magazine, hosted a virtual reception for issue xvii on August 28. The event's special guest was featured acclaimed poet Rudy Francisco, who stayed an hour past the end of the event to chat with attendees.



Cedar Roe clerk Jeremy Anderson safely delivers materials to a patrons' car. After a pilot program launched at Leawood Pioneer Library in July, Curbside Holds Pickup service launched at Gardner Library on August 24 and Cedar Roe Library on August 31.

NEXT ISSUE

-  **Cover Story:** Civic Engagement in an Election Year
-  **Branching Out:** Curbside Holds Pickup at Gardner Library
-  **Patron of the Month:** Brett Seaton, *elementia* Contributor
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Elaine Bagley Celebrates 30 Years



JOHNSON COUNTY
KANSAS
Library

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