



Book Report

Library Helps Connect Songwriter to Global Music Initiative

Jacoby Elliott is a singer/songwriter who grew up in Olathe, started performing in the Kansas City area, and is now based in Colorado.

In 2016 and 2017, Johnson County Local Arts Librarian Bryan Voell featured Elliott twice on the Library's local music blog. Partly through those posts, Elliott came to the attention of Beyond Music, a global music initiative launched by the non-profit Swiss Beyond Foundation and Co-Founder and rock legend Tina Turner.

On his Facebook page in February, Elliott shared the email from Switzerland, in which Beyond Music said, "Through Johnson County Library and on other channels we became aware of you and your musical talents." They invited him to join.

Jacoby says he was honored to be tapped by this impressive invitation-only platform, which last year had about 450 artists. He

was thankful that Voell had reached out to him early in his career, helping to spread the word about his music.

"It's only a blessing," Elliott said in an interview from Colorado. "He (Bryan Voell) was my first interview for 'Is Anybody Out There?' a message in a bottle, seeking to find a community of like-minded creative people. Five years later I get this email from Switzerland. It's beautiful."

Voell was impressed from the beginning with Elliott's work and is delighted his Library articles helped connect Elliott to Beyond Music. "He has a very distinct, confident vision of how his music can be a visual experience as well," Voell said. "He is a very accomplished singer and instrumentalist and he has a presence and a way of performing that you just have to pay attention."

Elliott, now 27, taught himself keyboard and was in a band in high school, as well as in advanced choir at Olathe North High. He moved to Kansas City in 2015 and performed at Davey's Uptown, recordBar and other venues.

He studied film and media for a year at KU and now specializes in singing, songwriting and music videos in a genre he describes as "gritty supernatural pop."

His pop persona is Y the Ghost, which Elliott says reflects the existential search for identity and for immortality through art. Two fan favorites of his are "Is Anybody Out there?" and "Hologram."

He moved to Colorado in January 2019 and was making good connections in the Denver area music and film community, even being featured in a film festival in



Singer/songwriter Jacoby Elliott

February 2020, before the pandemic struck. He used the pandemic time very productively, composing and polishing new songs that, as he says, "wouldn't leave me alone."

He also worked in film, "visual storytelling with the music," to enhance each new single and released a new song and video March 26 called "Is That too Deep?" at <https://youtu.be/xrgLnsvNZy4>. He had filming assistance from Bas Tamiel, (artist name Honnète), whom he met at Olathe North.

"Throughout the last year I've been finishing up some of my favorite songs that I've ever made," he said. "It's some of my strongest work." His earlier work was more dance pop, while his newer work is more emotional but still has a good dance vibe.

Regarding Beyond Music, Elliott is excited about the collaborations he can build and the organization's mission to connect musicians from around the world. "It has spiritual overtones of bringing people together, to transcend all the differences that cause so much strife," he said.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 **Branching Out:** Cedar Roe Getting New Shelving, New Layout
- 2 **Top 10 Holds:** May 2021
- 3 **Patron Spotlight:** Patron's Marketing Skills Give JCL Foundation a Boost
- 4 **Staff Spotlight:** Custodial Supervisor Provides Essential Service During Pandemic
- 5 **Event Spotlight:**
elementia Reception Reveals Power of Language and Art
Sharing Poems of Profound Love and Loss
- 6 **Taking a Closer Look:**
Social Media Highlights
- 7 **Month in Review:** May 2021

BRANCHING OUT

Cedar Roe Getting New Shelving, New Layout

In late 2019, the Cedar Roe branch was closed for two months for a flat roof replacement and some painting and other interior cosmetic improvements.

This year, the branch in Roeland Park closed again April 19 for additional upgrades, including a new heating and cooling system. When it reopens June 21, the most dramatic changes for the public will be new bookshelves and a new layout for even more convenient access to materials.

“The most exciting thing that’s going to happen is we are getting all new shelving. That’s what people are going to come in and really notice,” said Assistant Branch Manager Megan Clark.

The old shelving was several decades old and pretty worn and scratched. The shelves were black and quite tall, sometimes blocking light from the building’s windows and making it hard to reach books on the top shelves. Cedar Roe has about 45,000 items in its collection.

The new white shelving will be somewhat shorter, with more accessible top shelves, like what’s been used at the newer Lenexa and Monticello branches.

“It will lighten up the look around here, and we’re also going to redo the floor plan, so we’re excited about that,” Clark said.

The Holds section, which is quite popular with patrons, will be closer to the main entrance. The



Assistant Branch Manager Megan Clark next to shelving that will be replaced.

public computers, which have been somewhat scattered in the building, will also be grouped together in an area near the entrance.

The kid’s section will be close to the checkout area, near some windows that provide nice natural light. The periodicals and teens sections will be located at one end of the building, with another nice bank of large windows.

The project also involves a complete cleaning and refresh for the interior.

Cedar Roe, at 5120 Cedar St., opened in 1969 and won a design excellence award from the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The building is still generally in good shape, and the latest upgrades are part of the Library’s Comprehensive Library Master Plan.

While Central is closed this year, Cedar Roe’s upper level, used for storage, is temporarily housing thousands of books that will be distributed for the summer reading program.

Clark, who previously was an assistant branch manager at Oak Park, was named an assistant branch

manager at Cedar Roe and Shawnee in January 2020. She was just getting to know her new buildings and staff when the Coronavirus pandemic hit.

It’s been an adjustment, but she’s pleased with how patronage has rebounded. Cedar Roe had nearly 95,300 checkouts in 2020, almost as many as in 2018. The branch enjoys serving visitors from as far away as Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO, and others who just walk from nearby neighborhoods.

Cedar Roe is also one of five JCL branches - along with Leawood, Oak Park, Gardner and Spring Hill - that launched curbside service in 2020.

Since it began at Cedar Roe in September, the branch has averaged more than 110 curbside interactions per month, second only to Leawood.

Curbside service continues while the building is closed, and that service remains in high demand with 430 pickups in April. Clark is pleased to continue that contact with the public.

“It’s been fun working with staff to get that [new service] off the ground and figure out how it works and the logistics.” Clark said. “I’ve enjoyed that.”

 **TOP HOLDS** 

MAY 2021

-  **The Last Thing He Told Me** - Laura Dave
-  **The Four Winds** - Kristin Hannah
-  **The Midnight Library** - Matt Haig
-  **Sooley** - John Grisham
-  **People We Meet on Vacation** - Emily Henry
-  **That Summer** - Jennifer Weiner
-  **A Gambling Man** - David Baldacci
-  **The Lost Apothecary** - Sarah Penner
-  **The Paris Library** - Janet Skeslien Charles
-  **The Good Sister** - Sally Hepworth

PATRON OF THE MONTH

Patron's Marketing Skills Give JCL Foundation a Boost

Kelsey Jones of Olathe is one busy person. She is the editor-in-chief of neilpatel.com, an influential digital marketing blog. She is the mother of an active 3-year-old son. She's getting her MBA. Her plate is full.

And from 2012-2019 she also found time to volunteer for Johnson County Library and hopes to resume that volunteering at some point. She regularly helped shelve Holds at Blue Valley Library and cashiered for the book sales for several years. Then, from 2017-2019 she provided vital pro bono digital marketing and social media services to JCL Foundation officials, as they sought to build their brand and online presence.

"I feel like the people who work at the Library are some of the nicest, most passionate people you can be around," Jones says. "If you really

love your community and reading, there are so many opportunities you can help and put your talents to good use."

Jones grew up in Manhattan, KS and always loved to read. Her parents were also big readers and the family frequented the Manhattan Library.

She got a degree in English literature and creative writing from Kansas State University in 2008. But she had taught herself HTML in middle school and went to nationals with a web design for a high school club. During a college internship with K-State's career and employment services office, she helped design and write their marketing materials.

"I really loved that. It was really fun," she recalled. "It was all kind of self-taught and on-the-job learning."

She realized marketing was a very creative way she could put her writing skills to work, so after college she moved to Johnson County and worked for several companies, including running her own digital marketing consulting company from 2009-2019. She also found time to help out at the Library.

"They always need volunteers. Even something like shelving the Holds was always a good experience," she said.

After moving from south Overland Park to Olathe, she became a neighbor and friend of Johnson County Library Adult Services Manager Kinsley Riggs. Riggs admired Jones' social media proficiency and connected her to Stephanie Neu in the Foundation office in 2017.

Jones assisted the Foundation with its content strategy, website, Facebook and other social media, plus search engine optimization. She also helped plan the promotion for Library Lets Loose.

"It's awesome to be able to help people and they are so appreciative," Jones said. "The Foundation really trusted my expertise and as a result we were able to really grow their online presence."

During that time, Jones and her husband had a son, Lincoln. By the end of 2019 she needed to ease up on volunteering and devote more time to her family and career. But she had laid the groundwork for the Foundation's online engagement with patrons.

She's enjoying introducing Lincoln to books she loved as a kid, including the "I Spy" series, and regularly listens to Library audio books. She appreciates the Career & Finance programming, MakerSpace and other patron services.

She wants the public's awareness of what's available to continue to grow.

"I feel like Johnson County Library has done a good job of offering more than books and staying really relevant with how they can help the community," she said. "I just hope everybody knows that those types of things are available to them, and the Library is more than just books."



Kelsey Jones

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Custodial Supervisor Provides Essential Service During Pandemic

Custodial services have always been important to keeping Johnson County Library branches clean, healthy and pleasant. That’s never been more vital than during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The custodians responsible for those duties are supervised by Chay Her, Custodial Supervisor with Johnson County Facilities Management, who is truly dedicated to his job.

“We were considered essential workers, front-line workers,” Her says. “We have never stopped our jobs, because we knew there was a service that needed to be provided, whether it be for patrons or for Library staff.”

When the pandemic first struck in March 2020 and the Library branches were closed to the public, Her and his custodians deep cleaned every building, shampooing all the carpets, cleaning walls, scrubbing floors, sanitizing surfaces and making the buildings spotless. And since the branches reopened last summer, they’ve continued to ensure the buildings are safe for staff and patrons.

He gets a lot of positive feedback from Library management but gives all the credit to others.

“I know that a lot of people appreciate what we’re doing,” he said. “If we are doing a good job, it’s because my staff are all doing what they’re supposed to be doing.”

Her directly supervises 16 custodians in the larger branches. The smaller branches like Gardner and Edgerton have contracted services but Her responds to urgent issues.

Her, 46, has a compelling life story, beginning with his birth in Laos. His family were Hmong refugees during the Vietnam War and immigrated to the U.S. in 1979, when he was four years old. He grew up in Sacramento and married his high school sweetheart, Xue (pronounced Sue).

He worked two jobs while she got a business degree. The couple had two children, Mia, now 23, and Trevor, now 18.

When Trevor was a year old, Her moved his family to Olathe, because his brother had already moved to Johnson County and extolled the Midwest’s quality of life and cost of living. Her got an evening shift custodial



Chay Her keeps special projects listed on a whiteboard.

job at the Johnson County Courthouse so he could watch Trevor while Xue worked days.

Her worked as a custodian for Johnson County government for many years and was eventually promoted to senior custodian, training others and serving on the emergency response team.

In mid-2019, the Johnson County facilities department began overseeing Library custodians, allowing for standardized equipment and cleaning procedures. Her was named interim Custodial Supervisor for the Library as part of that reorganization and got the job officially a few months before the pandemic hit.

He says the Library fortunately never ran out of toilet paper or cleaning supplies, although gloves and masks were scarce at times. At one point, when Library staff were making masks, they supplied the

custodians and that was greatly appreciated.

Overall, Her says moving his family from California to Johnson County has worked out very well. In his spare time, Her and his wife love to fish at local lakes, and they are avid morel mushroom hunters.

Her recalls that during his childhood in California, libraries seemed like stern, silent places.

Nowadays, that’s all different, and he loves making his rounds to the Johnson County branches, seeing friendly librarians as well as the kids and families that flock to them.

“I realized the Library culture has changed,” he said. “People are there for knowledge. They are there for enjoyment.”

And he’s proud of the role he and his custodians play in fostering that welcoming and vibrant environment.

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

elementia Reception Reveals Power of Language and Art

This year's online reception for *elementia* XVIII, Johnson County Library's teen literary magazine, celebrated the creativity that fills the publication.

"In all that *elementia* does, we seek to uplift and empower the teens of Johnson County and beyond," said Information Specialist Cassandra Gillig as she welcomed about 100 participants to the Zoom event April 23.

This year's publication, which is focused on the theme "Bodies," is now available online and in print.



The event revealed the power of language, poetry and visual arts to illuminate the human condition in all its glory, struggle, survival and surrender.

Selected teen writers read works that were riveting, wise, haunting and inspiring, about human bodies, bodies of water, memory, death and love. A slide show illustrated the incredible portraits, sculptures and other winning visual art submissions.

Keynote speaker Franny Choi, acclaimed Korean-American writer, shared poems from her books and even an unpublished poem. Her work eloquently explores the immigrant experience and social activism, but also shares intensely personal insights.

Choi told participants she was blown away by the artistry in *elementia*.

"I am beyond honored to get to share this bit of virtual space with all of you talented, incredibly talented, enthusiastic and brilliant human beings," she said.

Local songwriter Jo Mackenzie, 17, capped off the night with live music.

The next issue's theme is "the unknown," with submissions welcomed until Feb. 21, 2022. Editors invited teens to mine the rich realm of the unfamiliar.

"Venture into the ocean, the night sky, the rainforest. Search for the aliens among us and beyond us," said editor Olivia Humphrey. "Find the murky edges of your imagination and focus on them. Visualize what exists in the afterlife and what's hidden in the dark."

Sharing Poems of Profound Love and Loss

Traci Brimhall grew up in a home where the only literature was X-Men comic books and the Bible. But that was enough to instill in her a love of writing, and a great appreciation for language, character and story.

She is now director of creative writing at Kansas State University and is also an award-winning writer known for lyrical poems and essays that explore both beauty and terror in life.

On May 11, she shared her writing with an enthusiastic Johnson County Library online audience. She read from her fourth collection, "Come the Slumberless to the Land of Nod," published in 2020.

Some of the poems and essays were written while she was

pregnant with her son, now seven, and during the trial for a friend's murder.

"At the same time I was bringing new life into the world, I was also sort of trying to emotionally reckon with my friend's sudden and violent loss," she explained.

When "stuck" for what to write, she composed letters to Thanatos, exploring shadow and darkness, and to Eros, about life and love. Those competing impulses became evocative poems in this collection.

She eloquently captured the connection between poet and reader: "I think everybody comes to poetry either looking for a window or a mirror. Either they want to see themselves in someone else's language and that's a version of intimacy," Brimhall said. "Or they want a window and they want to see into a life and a way of being that they might not totally understand and empathize their way into that."



Traci Brimhall

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!*

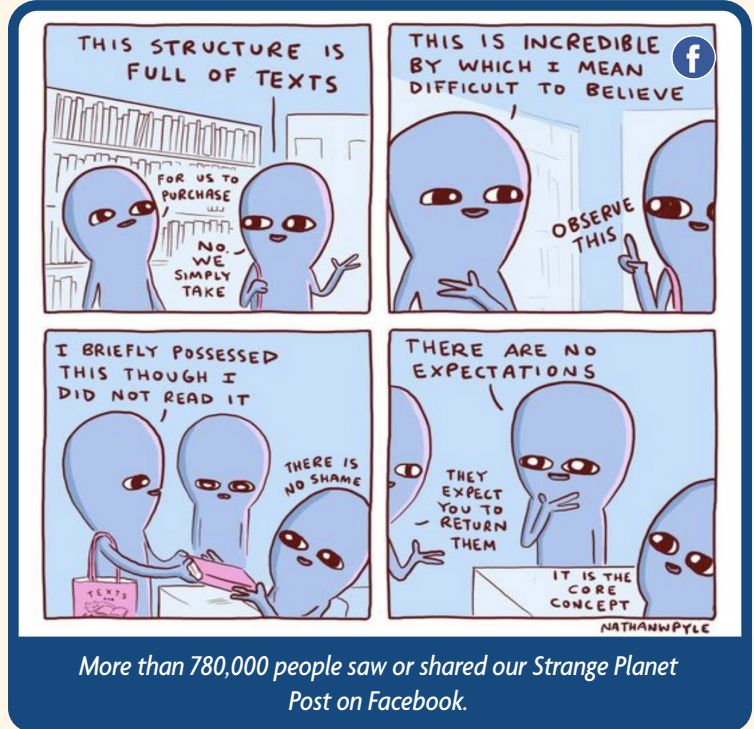


Johnson County Library
@jocolibrary

Hard to Resist!
Find out how Amazon, Facebook, Google & other companies control & constrict our choices and how to break free of them (and why we should).

Hard to Resist! - Johnson County Library
Hard to Resist! by JCLMATTI - a staff-created list : Find out how Amazon, Facebook, Google & other companies control & constrict our choices and ho...
@jocolibrary.bibliocommons.com

More than 11,400 people check out the Hard to Resist Booklist created by Youth Information Specialist Matt.



THIS STRUCTURE IS FULL OF TEXTS
FOR US TO PURCHASE NO WE SIMPLY TAKE
THIS IS INCREDIBLE BY WHICH I MEAN DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE
OBSERVE THIS
I BRIEFLY POSSESSED THIS THOUGH I DID NOT READ IT
THERE IS NO SHAME
THERE ARE NO EXPECTATIONS
THEY EXPECT YOU TO RETURN THEM
IT IS THE CORE CONCEPT
NATHANWPYLE

More than 780,000 people saw or shared our Strange Planet Post on Facebook.



jocolibrary
Johnson County Library - Monticello

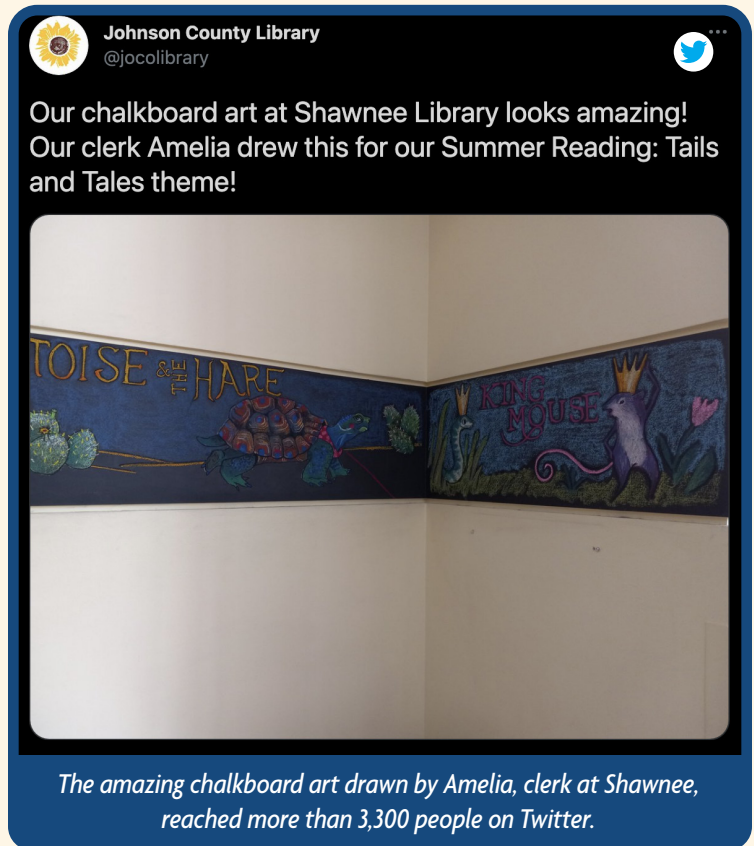
jocolibrary We know you missed them... new books are baaaaack!
4w

library.laura This makes me want to drive there right now 🥰🥰
4w 1 like Reply

toritally
Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay
yyyyyyyyyy! #librarynerdinwithdrawal
4w Reply

437 views
MAY 4
Log in to like or comment.

Patrons really missed our new books, and our Instagram video had more than 430 views to prove it!



Johnson County Library
@jocolibrary

Our chalkboard art at Shawnee Library looks amazing! Our clerk Amelia drew this for our Summer Reading: Tails and Tales theme!

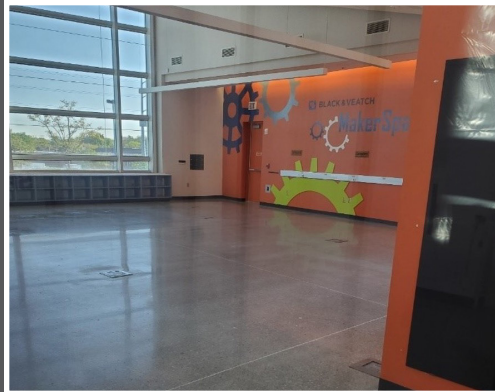
The amazing chalkboard art drawn by Amelia, clerk at Shawnee, reached more than 3,300 people on Twitter.



Month in Review May 2021



Leawood Library staff, led by Assistant Branch Manager Nancy Birmingham, shifted their collection to create more uniform shelving in nonfiction and holds and more space for graphic novels, DVDs, and CD audiobooks.

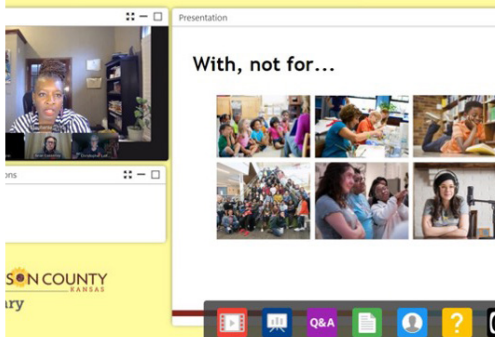


The MakerSpace facilitators returned to the Black and Veatch MakerSpace to prepare the space and equipment for reopening after CBU2.



Cedar Roe closed April 17 for an HVAC upgrade and other updates and continued to offer curbside service throughout the closure. The service was so popular, they recently added a walkup spot for patrons on foot.

Johnson County Library presents



More than 70 people attended the Library's first public input session for the Antioch Replacement project on May 19 via On24.



The Summer Reading Committee created a Tails and Tales virtual book display to highlight great summer reads. Check it out on our YouTube channel!



Winners were selected for the Teen Sci Fi Sticker Contest. Stickers are now available at branches while supplies last!

NEXT ISSUE



- Cover Story:** Getting Books Into the Community with Summer Reading

- Branching Out:** Drive-Thru Service Becomes Essential

- Patron Of The Month:** Book Club Patron Neeharika Buddha

- Staff Spotlight:** Meet Shannon Goebel, Early Literacy Coordinator

JOHNSON COUNTY KANSAS

Library

BOOK REPORT

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