



# Book Report

AUGUST 2021  VOLUME XXIX

## Navigating the Return to In-Person Programming

**A**s Johnson County Library emerges from the unprecedented COVID-19 era, a team of professionals is working hard to transition the system from online events to in-person services when it is practical and advantageous to do so.

"We are transitioning from strictly virtual to some sort of hybrid," said Joseph Keehn, program and events coordinator, who leads the team. "We are still going to be offering virtual programs in the fall. And we will offer a selection of in-person programs, given the availability of meeting room spaces and our partnerships that we have."

The programming initiatives will be guided by the administration and will be responsive as health concerns dictate. More information is available in the JCL Fall guide.

Library staffers are eager to welcome back the following programs:

- **The art exhibition series.** Art exhibits will once again be presented beginning in September at the Shawnee, Blue Valley and Oak Park branches. Future exhibits are anticipated, in partnership with InterUrban ArtHouse, Arts Asylum and the Kansas City Artists Coalition.
- **Listen Local.** The local music program will once again be offered at the Lenexa City Hall Community Forum Room, in partnership with the Lenexa Arts Council.
- **Moving as Learning.** This early childhood literacy programming will be offered for toddlers and preschoolers in area park community facilities, in partnership with Johnson County Parks and Recreation officials.
- **Finance advice for seniors.** An in-person event called "Which Senior Housing Option is Right for You?" will be offered in November at Oak Park Library, as part of the career and finance programs.
- **Genealogy.** One-on-one genealogy appointments will resume in the fall at pop-up locations.

In addition, Library meeting rooms are once again open for public use, with reservations available on the website. The Library has also resumed helping incarcerated individuals with in-person services.

The Library has learned a lot since March 2020.

"We've found our stride in online programming, so we are a little more efficient and effective in being able to offer series online and having a captive audience for those," Keehn said. Sessions with poets and authors have been very popular, attracting a diverse and growing audience.

Overall in 2020, JCL offered 423 programs online, with total attendance of nearly 64,100.

Storytimes will remain online through the fall. Some parents of children with special needs, who can't attend in person, have been delighted with online Storytimes.

But patrons clearly crave in-person opportunities. Now, the Library needs to find the proper balance of online, in-person, and hybrid programming, with its current staffing model.

The transition team is made up of people from branch management, communications, outreach and information services.

"They were charged with coming up with a strategy of how we were going to be implementing and prioritizing which programs go first," Keehn said. It's being done in phases and is a work in progress.

He praises his team, and indeed the entire Library organization.

"The staff has been incredibly adaptable and gracious as we are transitioning," he said. "They've demonstrated a lot of resilience."

The Library already has an example of hybrid programming with the monthly board meetings. Members meet in person at Monticello, but the public can watch



*Art exhibitions, like this one at Gardner in 2018, will return to branches this fall.*

online on Facebook Live. That could serve as a good model for other programs that have both in-person and online capabilities.

The team will continue evaluating the best options for 2022.

"We do have an opportunity here to also re-engage with the public," Keehn explained, noting that stakeholder interviews will be done this fall to determine a good path forward.

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# BRANCHING OUT

## Providing Youth Services to Multiple Branches

The youth services team assigned to the Gardner, Edgerton and Spring Hill community branches is a close-knit group dedicated to serving children and families in those fast-growing parts of Johnson County.

But without in-person programming during the pandemic, this team has expanded its horizons. The focus has shifted to innovative online youth services provided system-wide.

Jayma Zook, who has been a Youth Services Librarian for two and a half years, leads the team. She is joined by Matthew Imrie, a full-time youth information specialist, and part-time youth services specialists Samantha “Sam” Chong and Cassidy Coles.

“It’s my job to disseminate the information from youth services management into the buildings and also my job to speak up for things,” Zook explained.

When she started, her emphasis was on enhancing programming at Spring Hill, “because we felt there were enough people interested in it,” she said. “It just wasn’t being offered.”

So Imrie offered a popular Storytime at Spring Hill once per week. He also developed a rapport with teens and tweens who frequented Spring Hill.

Chong did Storytimes at Gardner and had a computer coding club for tweens.

Coles, who has worked at the Gardner branch for over 17 years, says serving that community has been one of her life’s great pleasures.

During COVID, Zook and the youth specialists have worked on committees providing programming throughout the branches. They fervently miss in-person contact with patrons, but value their new staff relationships.

“It’s actually been a really nice opportunity because usually we work as a group together,” Chong said. “It’s given us an opportunity to connect with people all over the system, to accomplish things that are available for everyone.”

For example, Chong was on the career and finance committee. She brought a youth-oriented perspective, suggesting programming geared to kids and families, such as financial planning advice for college.

She also worked on the Community Matters book club, an online family book club that started during the pandemic. It features age-appropriate books for tweens about challenging topics, such as “When Stars are Scattered,” by Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson, about growing up in a refugee camp.

Imrie was on the team planning online Storytimes and has done Storytime sessions himself.

Coles has served on committees including Incarcerated Services, the teen literary magazine “elementia,” the Early Literacy Team and the 6 by 6 cadre.

Zook was on the committee planning the Walk and Read program, including upcoming events at Big Bull Creek Park in



(Clockwise from top left) Matt Imrie, Cassidy Coles, Jayma Zook and Sam Chong provide youth services to the Gardner, Edgerton and Spring Hill communities.

Edgerton Aug. 27-Sept. 6 and at Veterans Park in Gardner Sept. 24-Oct. 3.

She is excited about a new partnership with the city of Edgerton. Once in-person programming resumes, an Edgerton recreation official will offer a Storytime once per month at that branch.

Zook’s team has great partnerships with the schools, doing outreach to teachers and other education groups in the area.

Recently, Imrie has assisted a Gardner day camp, selecting books for camp officials to come and collect at the branch.

Zook and her colleagues are eager for a return to in-person services, but the staff connections forged during the pandemic have been very worthwhile.

“Definitely getting to know more people in more branches,” Zook said. “I do feel like it kind of took away from this team, because we’re all busy doing all these things. But that can also be a good thing, because now we know about all of those things, so we can share that information when we are physically in the buildings.”



### TOP HOLDS



#### JULY 2021

- **The Last Thing He Told Me** - Laura Dave
- **Malibu Rising** - Taylor Jenkins Reid
- **People We Meet on Vacation** - Emily Henry
- **Golden Girl** - Elin Hilderbrand
- **The Paper Palace** - Miranda Cowley Heller
- **Falling** - T.J. Newman
- **The Midnight Library** - Matt Haig
- **That Summer** - Jennifer Weiner
- **The Maidens** - Alex Michaelides
- **The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo** - Taylor Jenkins Reid



# PATRON OF THE MONTH

## Book Clubs, Library Activities Engage Prairie Village Family



*The Langford Family, loyal Corinth patrons: (clockwise from top left) Aubrey, daughter Claire, and triplets Liam, Eloise, and Violet.*

**A**ubrey Langford and her four kids can walk from their Prairie Village home to Corinth Library, which is a good thing since they are all avid readers.

“We’re at the Library like every other day,” says 13-year-old Claire, who was in Johnson County Library’s American Girl Book Club for several years and now eagerly awaits the ninth book in the “Keeper of the Lost Cities” series by Shannon Messenger. She also likes the “Divergent” series by Veronica Roth.

Claire’s nine-year-old siblings (triplets Violet, Eloise and Liam) are also Johnson County Library book club patrons. Aubrey encourages each triplet’s individuality.

Violet did the American Girl book club online. Eloise was in the Kids book club for first through third graders. And Liam participated in the Tween book club and in the family-oriented Community Matters book club with his dad, Scott.

Aubrey grew up in Leawood and fondly remembers coming to Corinth with her grandparents, who lived nearby. Since she and her husband moved to Prairie Village 15 years ago they have been patrons at Corinth, especially after Claire was born.

Corinth was built in 1963 at 8100 Mission Road and is now one of the system’s older branches, but Aubrey appreciates the familiarity.

“Even the fact that Corinth hasn’t really been updated, it doesn’t bother me,” she said. “It’s old school and I like it.”

The family does an hour of quiet time every afternoon and Aubrey says that’s a great opportunity for her kids to bury their heads in books. Claire has read all the Harry Potter books and now the triplets are making their way through the series.

The kids all loved the Roald Dahl classics. Liam enjoys the Warriors

children’s literature series by Erin Hunter and books by Rick Riordan.

Claire still remembers the American Girl book club from when she was about age 8 to 10. At the time, she had Caroline from the American Girl doll collection.

“The books were fun. I always liked it when there was a book that I knew about. If I had Caroline, I read the Caroline books,” she said. “It was like a group of eight kids and we would all get to know each other.”

Aubrey was especially glad that the book clubs continued online during the pandemic, which kept the family engaged with book conversations in a safe way.

“The fact that the book clubs went online to me was ideal,” Aubrey said. Even better was that the selected books were provided to families to keep, so their home book collection grew considerably.

The kids also watched a MakerSpace 3D printer demonstration online and participated in a crafts program online this spring, with the materials provided at Corinth.

“We made little pouches,” Claire recalled. “There was a (sewing instructor) online and she would guide us through how to make these really cool pouches with a cool design on them, which was a lot of fun.”

The Langfords are a very active family, with all four kids participating in swimming, junior tennis league and piano lessons. Claire will enter eighth grade at Indian Hills Middle School in the fall and the triplets will be third graders at Briarwood Elementary.

Aubrey appreciates how the Library contributes to their love of learning.

“I just appreciate it for the resources it’s provided for families and for kids,” she said, “and to have it in the community for as long as we have.”

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## Library Clerk Valued for Dedication and ELL Help

When Adriana Escudero moved to Johnson County in 2012, she didn't know anyone in the area but wanted to build a good life for herself after years of living on the East Coast.

One day, she got lost looking for a store in Overland Park and saw the Oak Park Library sign. She loved to read and decided to stop into the branch. She struck up a conversation with Information Specialist German Perilla, who told her about a job opening. She applied and was pleased to be hired as a part-time page in 2013.

It was the start of a life-changing career with Johnson County Library. She was promoted to part-time clerk at Cedar Roe and Shawnee in March 2020 and has just been promoted again to full-time clerk at Monticello and De Soto.

Through it all, Escudero has earned a reputation for dedication, great customer service, and particularly for helping Spanish-speaking patrons.

"She is one of the hardest workers I know," one of her managers wrote about her, "and always seeks to do what is best to serve our patrons, in an efficient and gracious manner."

Originally from Guatemala, where she spoke Spanish at home and learned English in school, Escudero moved with her parents to New York in 1999, where she worked for a time in a bookstore. She later moved to Virginia.

She visited Kansas City, Kan., in 2009 and enjoyed it, so decided to move to this area in 2012.

While working as a page at Oak Park one Saturday, she was asked to substitute for an English Language Learner teacher who couldn't make it. She did such a good job that she continued teaching the basic English language class for a year.

From there, she helped for several years with the Colorin Colorado program, assisting with the children of ELL parents who came to Oak Park for classes. She also helped with the annual Tertulias event, a vibrant night of Latin American music and arts.

While the branches were shuttered during the pandemic, Escudero was furloughed for a short time



*Adriana Escudero was recently promoted to full-time clerk.*

and then was asked to help out at the Department of Motor Vehicles office in Merriam, which was very busy and short-staffed.

"I liked it because we got to help a lot of customers," Escudero said. "There were a lot of Latinos who don't speak English and they don't know what to do. We got to help a lot of Latinos."

While working part-time for the Library, Escudero has usually also had a full-time job, often at Walmart or at warehouses. She is pleased to now devote her energies to her full-time Library clerk position. In her spare time, she is very active with her church and is known for helping out anyone in need.

Escudero said she enjoys interacting with Library patrons, both adults and children, and talking about books with them. She also has loved her time with JCL because of her co-workers, who have motivated her to keep gaining new skills.

She said she has gotten great mentoring from her first branch manager, Maggie Vallazza (now retired), and from German Perilla, Christine Peterson, Christian Madrigal, Jared Harper, Megan Clark and Anna Gordon.

"I have grown mentally and emotionally while being at JCL," she said. "I wouldn't be who I am today if it weren't for my coworkers and supervisors."



# EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

## Topeka Zoo Zooms in with Fascinating Animals

**Y**oung patrons and their parents got a close-up view of five captivating animal species on July 1, courtesy of an online Johnson County Library program.

Topeka Zoo Education Program Manager Rachael Rost took full advantage of the summer reading theme “Tails and Tales” in presenting some of the zoo’s most interesting creatures.

“When we do these programs we like to bring a variety of animal groups,” Rost told her audience of more than 40 families via Zoom. “We like to teach people not just about the big, fuzzy, charismatic major fauna that we have at the zoo but we also like to talk about the little guys as well.”

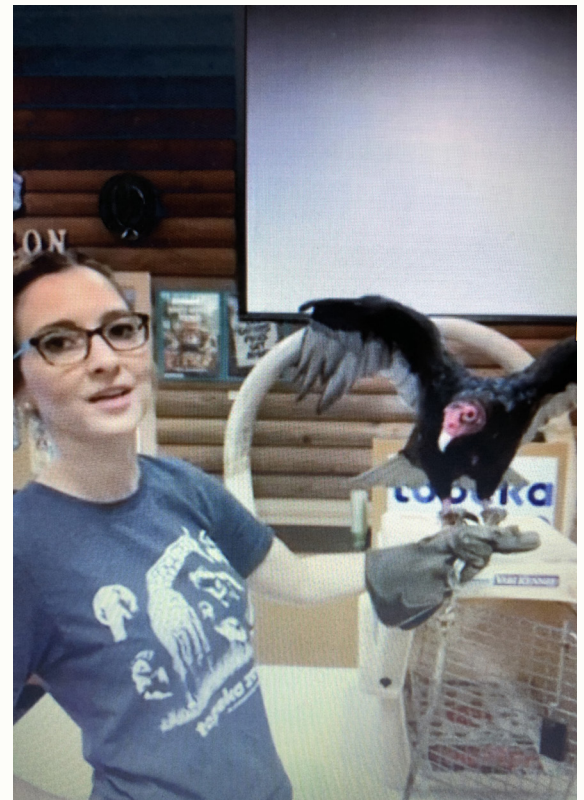
Rost radiated cheerfulness and enthusiasm as she adeptly handled a Vietnamese walking stick, a blue-tongued skink, a ball python, an armadillo and a turkey vulture. She

fielded questions from kids and extolled the virtues of species that often get a bad reputation. She explained how snakes control disease-carrying populations of mice and rats.

She also praised Lily, the turkey vulture who is one of the zoo’s most popular animals. Lily fell from a nest on a farm and was rescued by a Topeka Zoo rehabilitation official about 20 years ago. She has an affectionate personality and gets along well with her human handlers.

“Turkey vultures are scavengers,” Rost said, explaining how they help clean up our world. “They are the garbage men and women of the animal kingdom.”

Rost urged her audience to appreciate the value of snakes, vultures and, indeed, all zoo species. She was an eloquent educator and ambassador, raising awareness about the wonders of the natural world.



*Rachael Rost, Topeka Zoo Education Program Manager, shows off Lily the turkey vulture.*

## Interactive Program Provides Entertainment, Science Education

**J**ohnson County Library offered an interactive program July 7 that was both entertaining and educational, combining an animated adventure story with segments about nature and science.

The program, called “Unicorns Break the Cage” was offered by Talewise (formerly Science Tellers), a company that provides materials to promote science learning through storytelling.

About 35 participating families watched the online story about two kids who visit a zoo, confront a tyrannical zoo owner and help free a

chained horse that knows in its heart it is a unicorn.

Talewise presenter Dorci Hill, of Houston, Texas, energized the audience with her vitality and good humor. She paused the story periodically to give Johnson County kids a chance to ponder the adventure and to predict what would happen next. Participants could see and communicate directly with Hill via Zoom.

The animation was interspersed with informative live-action segments about horned animals on land and sea, the unique

characteristics of nocturnal animals, and the social qualities of animals like wolves and meerkats.

Youth Information Specialist Michelle Ranney said the Library has had a relationship with Talewise and Science Tellers in the past. Librarians realized “Unicorns Break the Cage” would be ideal for the 2021 summer reading theme of “Tails and Tales.” It was geared for children primarily in kindergarten through fifth grade. Several participants told Hill at the end of the session that they had fun and learned a lot.

## 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

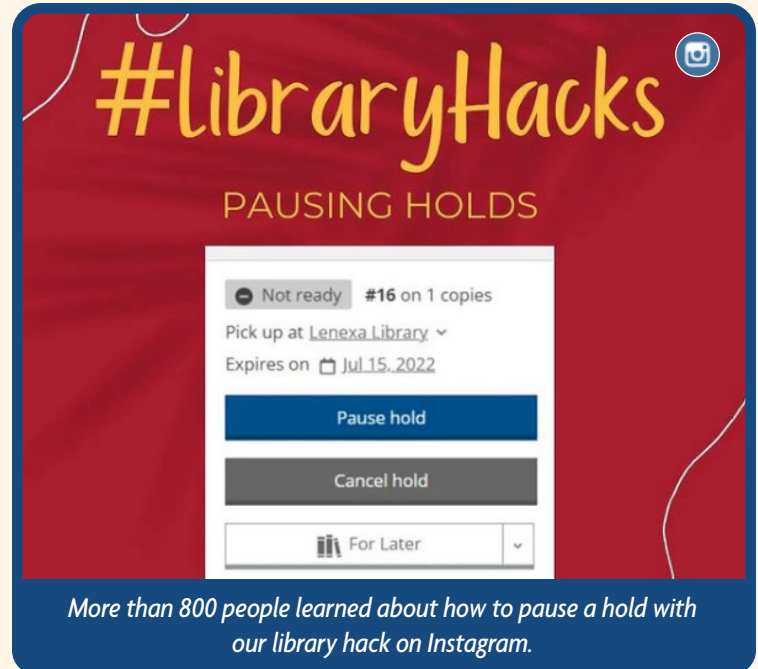
Meet Sara Dykman

**BICYCLING with BUTTERFLIES**

MY 10,201-MILE JOURNEY FOLLOWING THE MONARCH MIGRATION

SARA DYKMAN

Around 2,000 people were reached by our Twitter post about author Sarah Dykman, who spoke about her book *Bicycling with Butterflies* on July 31.



#LibraryHacks

PAUSING HOLDS

Not ready #16 on 1 copies

Pick up at [Lenexa Library](#)

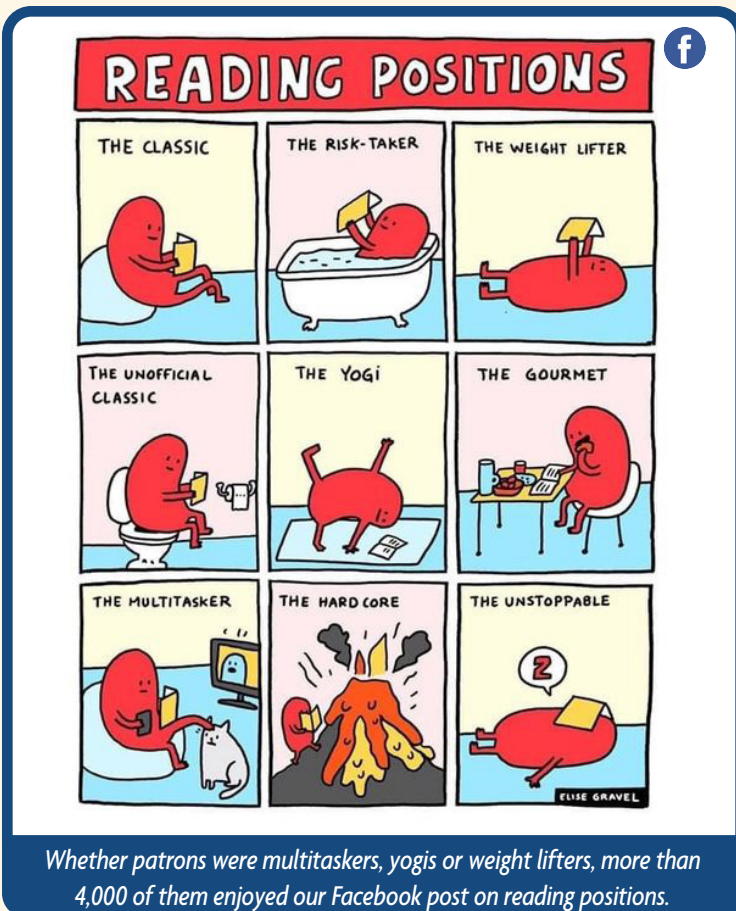
Expires on Jul 15, 2022

Pause hold

Cancel hold

For Later

More than 800 people learned about how to pause a hold with our library hack on Instagram.



**READING POSITIONS**

THE CLASSIC

THE RISK-TAKER

THE WEIGHT LIFTER

THE UNOFFICIAL CLASSIC

THE YOGI

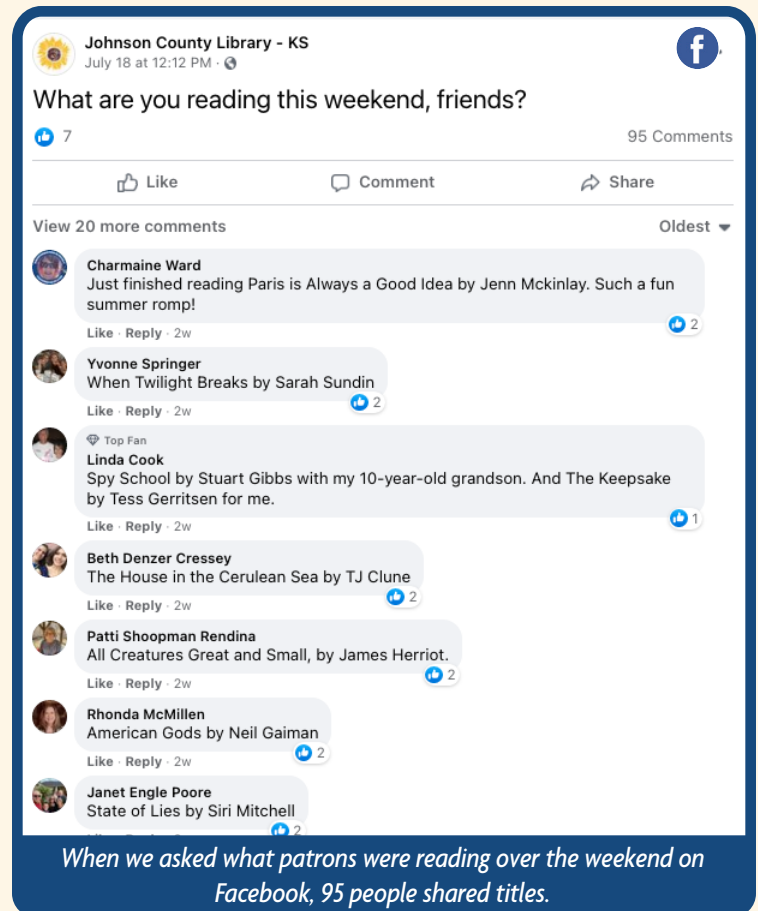
THE GOURMET

THE MULTITASKER

THE HARD CORE

THE UNSTOPPABLE

Whether patrons were multitaskers, yogis or weight lifters, more than 4,000 of them enjoyed our Facebook post on reading positions.



Johnson County Library - KS

July 18 at 12:12 PM · KS

What are you reading this weekend, friends?

7

95 Comments

Like Comment Share

View 20 more comments

Oldest

Charmaine Ward

Just finished reading *Paris is Always a Good Idea* by Jenn McKinlay. Such a fun summer romp!

Like · Reply · 2w

Yvonne Springer

When *Twilight Breaks* by Sarah Sundin

Like · Reply · 2w

Top Fan

Linda Cook

Spy School by Stuart Gibbs with my 10-year-old grandson. And *The Keepsake* by Tess Gerritsen for me.

Like · Reply · 2w

Beth Denzer Cressey

*The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Clune

Like · Reply · 2w

Patti Shoopman Rendina

*All Creatures Great and Small*, by James Herriot.

Like · Reply · 2w

Rhonda McMillen

*American Gods* by Neil Gaiman

Like · Reply · 2w

Janet Engle Poore

*State of Lies* by Siri Mitchell

Like · Reply · 2w

When we asked what patrons were reading over the weekend on Facebook, 95 people shared titles.





# Book Report

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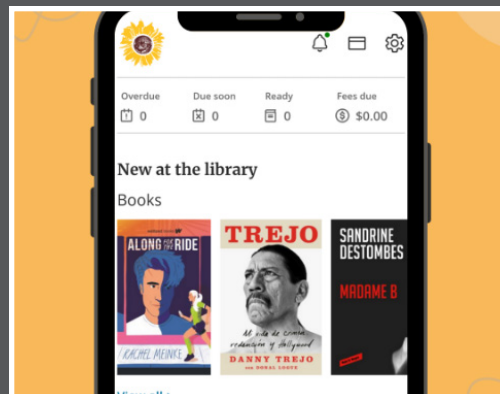
## Month in Review July 2021



Roeland Park mayor Mike Kelly and Ward 1 Councilmember Jan Faidley visited the recently reopened Cedar Roe Library on July 6, welcoming patrons back to the building with balloons and Roeland Park t-shirts.



Several Library staff spent the afternoon of July 29 at Kauffman Stadium for the Royals' annual event Library Day at the K. Baseball fans were treated to some Library swag from five metro-area libraries.



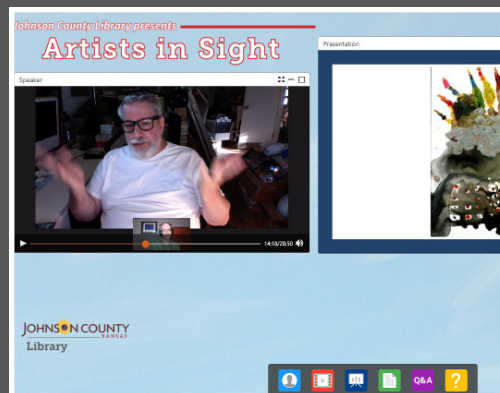
On July 19 the Customer Experience team launched a new version of the Johnson County Library app for mobile devices.



Members of the Merriam community joined Library staff and elected officials on July 7 to give their input on the forthcoming Antioch Replacement Library.







Pop Up book giveaway events for Summer Reading were held in parks across Johnson County in July.



The Library hosted artist Joe Bussell on July 27 for the virtual program Artists in Sight, where visual artists explain the inspiration behind their work. The program is available on Library OnDemand.

### NEXT ISSUE



-  **Cover Story:** Library Lets Loose Tells Stories of Lives Transformed
-  **Branching Out:** Corinth Garden Grows a Love of Libraries
-  **Patron of the Month:** Jennifer Marrs, Gardner Library Patron
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Christopher Leitch, Community Relations Coordinator

**JOHNSON COUNTY**  
KANSAS  
**Library**

### BOOK REPORT

A monthly publication for government officials and residents of Johnson County

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