

## Incarcerated Patrons Enjoy Library Cards, Other Services

Incarcerated Services Librarian Melody Kinnamon fervently believes Library services are for all Johnson County residents, including incarcerated individuals who can't visit the branches.

"We are one of the few public Library systems in the nation that has an incarcerated services Librarian, that has realized the importance of serving that community," she said. "We are very progressive and I just really appreciate both the Board's support and Corrections' support and the partnerships within the county. The Library, Corrections, Mental Health, the Foundation, everybody getting together to serve these people. We've got a lot of great people working to serve this population."

This year, Johnson County Library has expanded its outreach to Corrections facilities on the New Century campus. Library staffers assist Adult Residential Center clients serving alternative work-release sentences, and clients receiving intensive substance abuse treatment at the Therapeutic Community Center. Currently, ARC/TC has about 110 clients per month.

Kinnamon and other members of the Library's Incarcerated Services team resumed in-person visits to the campus in April.



*New books displayed at Adult Residential Center Library*

They've seen an uptick in the number of library cards issued, called "justice cards," and a pleasant Library space at the Adult Residential Center has been enhanced with additional books and more office hours.

"The justice cards are Johnson County Library cards that are issued to the Department of Corrections clients who reside within that system," Kinnamon explained. "We are focusing more on this population and serving their specific needs better. I can see it continuing to grow."

Kinnamon says about 100 new justice cards have been issued this year, an increase over 2020. The "justice cards" are just like Library cards issued to patrons in the branches, and clients can continue to use them even when they no longer reside at Corrections.

Before the pandemic, Kinnamon and others offered in-person Library office hours on campus one day per week. From March 2020 through April 2021, they provided services virtually, via Zoom.

But they are now able to offer in-person Library office hours every Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. As many as 40 clients visit each time.

"The Department of Corrections is so amazing," Kinnamon said. "They have welcomed us and accommodated us."

The department provides a lovely, sunny room with comfortable chairs. Johnson County Library arranges for local artists to display their work, and Johnson County Library Foundation grants provide thousands of dollars for the Library to purchase books, which clients can then check out on site.

Library staffers also help clients find and check out up to three books each time from throughout the system, which are delivered to the campus by Johnson County couriers.

"I really enjoy our conversations," Kinnamon said. "We get to do a lot of readers' advisory work." Library staff and clients discuss favorite authors and books of all genres.

Kinnamon recalls one man who visited the Library every Wednesday. He told her it was the best part of his week.

"He could just be a Library patron for those 30 minutes and he said it meant a lot to him," Kinnamon recalled. Other clients are equally appreciative.

Kinnamon and her colleague Scott Stone also lead a lively book club gathering with eight to 10 clients once a month on campus. She said she learns so much from the clients, who are thoughtful and well-read.

"It's wonderful. I love that it's voluntary," she said. "It says something that we have a waiting list. We have great, wonderful discussions."

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# BRANCHING OUT

## Libraries Once Again Displaying Beautiful Art Works

Creative exhibitions are finally back in the Library branches, and Johnson County Local Arts Librarian Bryan Voell couldn't be happier.

"We're just excited to have art back and to be working with artists again," Voell said as he discussed the displays currently up through Dec. 21 at eight branches.

For years, the Libraries have been great spaces for the public to view distinctive paintings, sculptures, ceramics and other works by local artists. The COVID pandemic halted all that in March 2020.

But this year the local arts committee determined that art was one positive way to resume providing in-person programming. The displays reappeared Sept. 1. A new round of exhibits begins in January.

"Exhibitions are passive programs," Voell explained. "It draws people in but it's not something where we are putting people in close proximity with each other. People can enjoy the art safely."

It's another way to make the Libraries welcoming and meaningful for patrons.

"It's being inspired by what they see on the walls, it's learning about the artists and it gives them another place to share their work," Voell said. "We do provide an honorarium to the



Local Arts Librarian Bryan Voell oversees exhibits

artists. That was important as well. Artists especially have been hurt drastically by the COVID experience, the shutdown. So, this was a way for us to open that avenue of sharing their work."

Johnson County Library has partnerships with the Kansas City Artists Coalition at Blue Valley and Oak Park Libraries; with InterUrban ArtHouse at Leawood; and with The Arts Asylum at Antioch. Those organizations curate exhibits from artists in their networks.

The Library also currently has gallery displays at Cedar Roe, Gardner, Lenexa and Shawnee. Corinth will resume exhibiting work in January. Art will reappear at Central Resource Library once that renovation is complete.

Lenexa City Center Library is currently hosting a particularly significant exhibit. It features a photographic series of decommissioned Minuteman Missile silos by Nate Hofer, recently named as a winner of the Global Peace Photo Award. The award was presented in Austria and honors works internationally that capture humanity's quest for a peaceful world.

"It was good timing for us. That is really cool," Voell said.

Information about featured artists is available at [jocolibrary.org/events/exhibitions](http://jocolibrary.org/events/exhibitions).

While galleries were closed during the pandemic, Voell and the committee started a virtual program called Artists In Sight, in which he interviewed local artists about their work, their creative process and what inspires them. Those interviews are available at the Discover Library OnDemand portion of Johnson County Library's website. With the galleries back open, it's another great way to promote the shows.

New exhibits will be up from January through April 21, with featured artists including Kathy Liao, Brittany Noriega and Angie Pickman.

"It will be an awesome display," Voell said of next year's exhibits. "We have a pretty incredible list of artists."

Johnson County Library also celebrates student art works at the Blue Valley branch. In the past, work by Blue Valley School District students has been posted in the gallery space. In 2022, it will be in the area frequented by young readers. The student display is coordinated by Information Specialists Jess Wagner and Rachel Novotny, who are part of the Library's Local Arts team.

"There's plenty of wall space outside what used to be the Storytime room and then as you go into the youth area," Voell said. "It will be viewable by kids who may not go by the gallery."



### TOP HOLDS



#### OCTOBER 2021

- Apples Never Fall - Liane Moriarty
- The Lincoln Highway - Amor Towles
- State of Terror - Hillary Rodham Clinton, Louise Penny
- Peril - Bob Woodward
- A Slow Fire Burning - Paula Hawkins
- Cloud Cuckoo Land - Anthony Doerr
- The Judge's List - John Grisham
- The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo - Taylor Jenkins Reid
- The Paper Palace - Miranda Cowley Heller
- Game On: Tempting Twenty-Eight - Janet Evanovich



# PATRON OF THE MONTH

## Extraordinary Volunteer is Stalwart at Book Donation Center

**A**t age 82, Larry Leighton still goes to work six days per week. He devotes nearly 40 hours per week to his duties. And as he jokes, “They double my pay every month.”

In fact, Leighton works as an incredibly dedicated volunteer with the Friends of Johnson County Library’s book donation sorting center. He gets paid in free cups of coffee, the friendship of other volunteers and in a deep sense of satisfaction for performing a worthwhile service.

“It’s fun. It’s interesting. I do enjoy it,” Leighton says.

Leighton oversees a small team of volunteers at the sorting center at 82nd and Melrose Drive in Lenexa. They take gently-used donated books and sell them on various websites. Using a computer program, Leighton assesses the books’ price and popularity and posts them for sale.

Orders come in from all over the country (even from overseas), sometimes from bookstores but mostly from individuals. The team prepares them for mailing to the book buyers.

Years ago, Leighton started volunteering a few hours per week, but as others have rotated in and out, he’s assumed more responsibilities. Now he’s there seven hours Mondays through Fridays and four hours on Saturdays.

His team consists of five book listers and five book shippers, all women. “They are all really nice gals,” he says. He enjoyed working with Matt Delaney, the Friends of JCL business manager who retired earlier this year. He appreciates Shanta Dickerson, the Friends of JCL operations manager.

The book sales are a major revenue generator for Friends of JCL. Leighton has a list of dozens of books or book sets that have sold for over \$100 this year, including complete Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew sets; a Calvin and Hobbes set; and an original Stephen King Hardcover Book Club edition.

Leighton grew up around dairy cows in College Station, Texas, where his dad was a Texas A&M professor. There weren’t many playmates living nearby, so he entertained himself by reading, including the Hardy Boys and Mark Twain. He’s still an avid reader of history and fiction.

He studied aeronautical engineering at Texas A&M, served in the Air Force in Indiana 1961-1964, then worked for Procter & Gamble in Dallas and Cincinnati. After an Air Force buddy with a job at Hallmark talked about what a great company it was, Leighton applied and was hired.

He moved with his wife and two young children to Overland Park and worked for Hallmark from 1967 to 2000. He had a series of management positions in a very fulfilling career.

Leighton’s first wife died unexpectedly in 1990 and he was a widower for a few years before he remarried. He and his wife Paula live in Leawood and have a wonderful marriage, but Leighton says volunteering helps him stay busy.

After retiring from Hallmark at age 61, he enjoyed playing golf, but soon realized he needed a greater purpose in his life. He volunteered at various golf courses and with Heart to Heart, Intl. and Cross-Lines Community Outreach before he saw a notice about Library volunteering. At the book sorting center, he found his niche.

“It gets me out of the house. It lets my wife have some time,” Leighton said. “She’s a sweetheart. I love her dearly and I want to let her have her space.”

Plus, he gets to socialize with nice people and give donated books new life. And it’s a great benefit to the Library.

“I have no plans to change,” Leighton said, “as long as they need me.”



*Incredible volunteer with Friends of Johnson County Library Larry Leighton*

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## Staffer Makes Building Security a Top Priority

For the past seven years, Tad Twidwell has worked for the Johnson County Library system, most of that time as branch manager of the Antioch Library.

But his career background includes a wide range of skills in law enforcement, corrections and Library management, having previously worked for Johnson County government as a corrections officer at the Juvenile Detention Center and then with other juveniles as a Child in Need of Care specialist.

In August, Twidwell took a new job that capitalizes on all those specialties. He is assigned to the Johnson County Sheriff's Office but primarily oversees Library building safety and security, in the new position of physical security specialist.

"This position was developed for Johnson County Library because they wanted somebody to oversee the physical security of their buildings," Twidwell explained. "They created a Memorandum of Understanding with the Johnson County Sheriff. It was approved by the Library Board in July of this year."

So far, he's really enjoying his new job and duties.

"It's a convergence of all my experience in one position, and it's been great," he said.

Twidwell emphasizes the Library buildings are safe and will remain accessible to the public. He works to ensure the buildings remain secure and to coordinate workplace security, especially from a staff standpoint.

"I want to maintain a safe environment for both the public and the staff," he said.

The idea for this new position had been in the works for several years and predated the COVID pandemic. Library administration became convinced that safety and security was a full-time job and determined a MOU with the sheriff's department was the best approach to make that happen.

Duties include identifying security vulnerabilities; assigning appropriate key card parameters and inventory control; assessing the ID badge process for safety; working with Library administration on access control policies and procedures for all buildings; maintaining and monitoring cameras and their placement; optimizing the alarm system and how it is used; helping to train new employees in safety and security procedures; and serving as an advisor and



*Tad Twidwell's new job deals with building safety*

liaison on new construction and building renovations.

The memorandum of understanding gets reviewed every year, and the position calls for making an annual security presentation to the Library board.

Twidwell is part of a team of five in the sheriff's department who are responsible for building safety and security of all county facilities. He reports directly to Chief Security Officer Dave Stutheit, whom previously worked as an agent with the U.S. Secret Service.

Twidwell also assists with security of other county buildings as needed, but Libraries are his top priority.

"It's a great team here and a great team at JCL," Twidwell said. "I'm happy to keep working with

the County and to keep interacting with JCL and meeting some new friends here."

Since he started, he's been evaluating the contracts in place with different vendors for software and cameras.

His office is in a County facility, but he is finding plenty of time to visit the Library branches, including the smallest rural outposts. Twidwell will work closely with Library administration, including Jen Mahnken, associate director for branch services, who was his manager during his time at JCL. That was a particularly attractive aspect of this new job.

"JCL is such a wonderful place to work," he said. "And I've made some great relationships. I'll be able to maintain those but serving in a different role and capacity."



## EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

## Strategies for Successful Advocacy

Janine Vanderburg, a community activist from Colorado, is devoted to changing the way people think, talk and act about aging and ageism. She is Initiative Director of Changing the Narrative, a campaign to maximize opportunities for older adults.

On Oct. 2, Vanderburg gave a Zoom presentation to a Johnson County Library audience about how to write compelling and effective letters to newspapers, elected officials and community influencers.

While Vanderburg focused on the cause of ending age discrimination, her strategies and recommendations were applicable to all sorts of advocacy.

"You can apply the same thing for affordable housing, for climate change issues, for better streets, for racial justice," Vanderburg told participants. "The formula remains the same."

The best letters are concise and pack a punch, no more than about 250 words, she advised.

These letters include the following ingredients: they tell compelling real-life stories; they identify the value that is at stake, such as justice; they include facts and statistics about how the issue affects people; and they provide solutions, such as specific law changes.

"This doesn't need to be perfect," Vanderburg said. "We don't need to be great writers. The point is to tell your story. We know legislators find this very powerful."

She offered advice on how to reach the right lawmakers and influencers and said email is better than a mailed letter. Timeliness is key.

"The most important thing is to not have paralysis analysis," she urged.

"The thing is to submit promptly. If an issue is in the news, if something is going to the Legislature ... don't wait to have a friend read it and to sleep on it. Just get the thing out."



*Janine Vanderburg offered advocacy strategies*

## Patrons Discuss Gender Identity Questions

Johnson County Library's News & Views program invites patrons to discuss timely topics, using information from books, newspapers, podcasts, documentaries and other media.

On Oct. 21, a small group gathered for a lively online discussion about Gender and Gender Identity. The discussion was moderated by Information Specialist Amanda Williams. Civic Engagement Librarian Ashley Fick was also present.

Library staff have been trained by Kansas State University's Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy to lead the conversations, with the goal that participants will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of differing opinions and find common ground.

That's what happened Oct. 21.

Participant Abigail acknowledged this is a challenging topic. "My gender identity is the same as assigned at birth," she said. "I'm still trying to figure out how to say that in a smooth way, so you can tell how far along I am on this journey."

Abigail is a teacher and said many of her students now use they/them pronouns or identify as non-binary. "I want to understand them more," she said.

Participant CJ watched the documentary "Do I Sound Gay?" which he found helpful and thought-provoking. He also gained new insights from an NPR article entitled, "The Transgender Prejudice and the Belief in a Biological Basis for Gender."

"For me," CJ said, "there's this whole other world of other experiences that people are having that I was not aware of before diving into more understanding of these gender identity topics."

Participant Steve had a different perspective and said he was persuaded by the book, "The End of Gender," by neuroscientist Debra Soh, which argues gender has a biological basis.

Despite the differing opinions, participants appreciated the friendly and sincere dialogue.

Future News & Views conversations are anticipated online, or in person when it's safe.



# TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

## Social Media Highlights

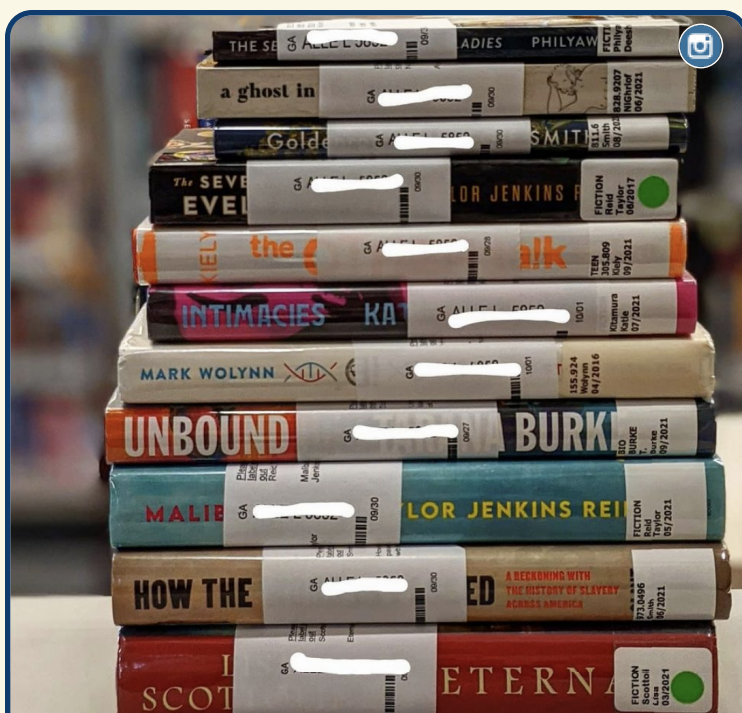
As you can see by the posts below, the Johnson County Library system continues to thrive even in these difficult times! **Thank you for your support!** *Click the captions to view full posts online!*



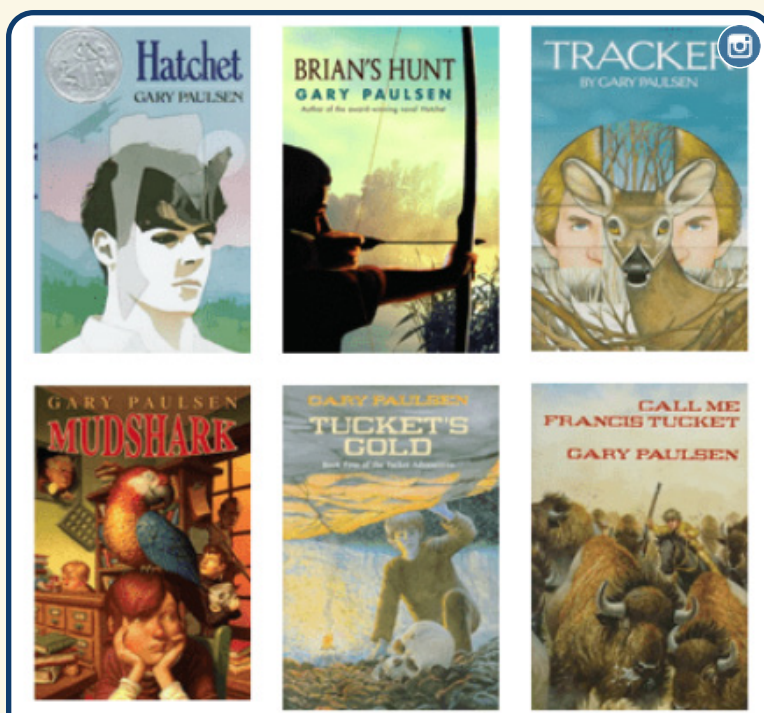
Staff got creative for Halloween and had great engagement on Facebook and Instagram.



The community is excited for our Writer's Conference.



Patrons could relate to the conundrum faced by our librarian Lisa at Gardner – more than 100 liked this post on Instagram.

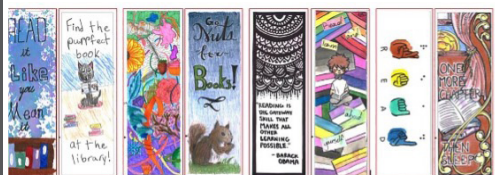
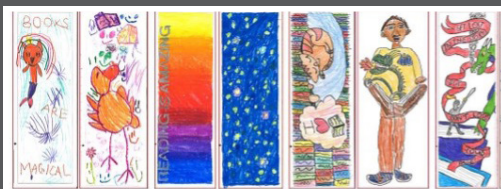


We were saddened to learn of the passing of three-time Newbery Honor author, Gary Paulsen, and our post had the highest number of comments this month.





## Month in Review October 2021



*The Friends of Johnson County Library celebrated National Friends of Libraries Week October 17 to 23 by presenting the winners of the annual Contest to the Library's Board of Directors and to our community.*



*County Manager Penny Post oak Ferguson was joined by County Librarian Sean Casserley, Executive Assistant Patti Kangethe and 4th District Commissioner Janeé Hanzlick for the September COVID Fatigue Fighters event.*



*Library staff celebrated Halloween in the branches with costumes and displays.*



*Ballot drop boxes were available for advance voters at six library branches: Blue Valley, Central Resource, De Soto, Gardner, Shawnee and Spring Hill.*







*Gardner youth services staff took advantage of the beautiful Fall weather to meet in person, outside, and there may have been playground equipment involved to give them plenty of chances to stretch our legs between important agenda items.*



*Between Oct. 4 and 6, 2021, an automated sorter was installed at the Friends' Pine Ridge facility. The unit will help Friends staff and volunteers sort donations efficiently and quickly by type and salability.*

### NEXT ISSUE



-  **Cover Story:** Writers' Conference and Building a Strong Writing Community
-  **Branching Out:** Gardner Branch turns 20
-  **Patron Of The Month:** Dedicated volunteer at book sorting center
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Meet Josh Adkins, new Warehouse Coordinator

**JOHNSON COUNTY**  
KANSAS

## Library

### BOOK REPORT

*A monthly publication for government officials and residents of Johnson County*

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