



Book Report

FEB 2020  VOLUME XII

Storytimes Booming at Johnson County Library

The toddlers in Angelica Reiff's Storytime at Oak Park Library wiggle their way through exercises, chortle with delight while singing songs, and sit engrossed as she reads aloud. For the children, it's 30 minutes of fun.

But for Reiff and Johnson County Library's other Storytime leaders, this is crucial educational enrichment.



Angelica Reiff, Oak Park youth services librarian

"It's brain development," says Reiff, an Oak Park youth services librarian since 2014. Reiff quotes research by author Jackie Silberg to note that "although the brain is capable of learning throughout life, nothing will ever again match this most exuberant time of learning."

Reiff starts with gentle motor skill activities. She teaches sounds and words through rhymes and music. She knows the books that kids will love, like "In the Snow," by Sharon Phillips Denslow and "How Do Dinosaurs Say I Love You?" by Jane Yolen.

Reiff references Silberg again to add that "when the rhythm and melody of language become part of a child's life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk."

Patrons are taking note. Johnson County Library's Storytimes are booming. 2019 was a record attendance year for the system's birth-to-six programming.

"We'll hit 45,000 for the first time ever," says Bradley Debrick, Early Literacy Coordinating Librarian since 2012. That's partly because of the new Monticello and Lenexa branches. System wide, patrons recognize Storytime's value in preparing children to read.

From January through November 2019, Storytime touched more than 24,000 children and 18,000 adults, mostly at Library branches but also through Head Start and community center outreach.

Reiff frequently hosts close to 50 toddlers and adults. Storytimes at Blue Valley, Leawood, Corinth and Lenexa are often so crowded that they have to do ticketing or name tags to manage attendance.

There's no cookie-cutter curriculum. Debrick says Johnson County Library hires skilled youth librarians and celebrates their individual creativity. The system has about 40 regular Storytime leaders, many of whom get rave reviews from patrons.

At Oak Park's Dec. 9 toddler Storytime class, parents said Reiff teaches their kids how to listen and learn.

"Angelica is wonderful," said Overland Park resident Kim Wiley, mother of 4-year-old Hazel and 1-year-old Oscar. "She's very engaged with the kids. She has a calming presence."



Wiley said Storytime has helped create a community of friends among the parents and children.

Lenexa resident Cheri Watts makes a point of bringing her 2-year-old granddaughter Emma to Reiff's sessions. "She's one of the best," Watts said.

Jamie Mull, of Overland Park, regularly attends with her 4-year-old daughter Penny and 2-year-old son Isaac. "She's very in tune with the group," Mull said. "When they need more wiggle, she gives them more wiggle."

Reiff is also responsive to Latino families and has bilingual book readings as needed. She meets with families before and after Storytime, providing advice on good books and early literacy strategies.

One mother recently told Reiff that her daughter was sitting at home with all the books in front of her. She got a doll and began singing the songs, just like Reiff does at Storytime.

That shows the impact, Reiff beamed. "It makes a Librarian's day."

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 Branching Out**
Small Town Charm at Edgerton Library
- 2 Top 10 Holds**
December
- 3 Patron Spotlight**
Todd and Paige Boyer and family
- 4 Staff Spotlight**
Cassandra Gillig, information specialist at Leawood Pioneer
- 5 Event Spotlight**
Happy Birthday Kansas
Therapeutic Art
- 6 Taking a Closer Look**
Social Media Highlights
- 7 Month in Review**
January 2020

BRANCHING OUT

Small Town Charm at Edgerton Library

John Keogh, Library branch manager for Gardner, Spring Hill and Edgerton, spends most of his time at Gardner but always enjoys his visits to the Edgerton branch.

“The thing I love about Edgerton is this is a community that still feels like a small town. And they take a lot of pride in that,” he says. “I really love this



John Keogh, Library branch manager for Gardner, Spring Hill and Edgerton, and Lynn Davis, Edgerton Library clerk

building. I love the space. I love the architecture. It’s a calming space to be.”

While Gardner and much of southern Johnson County are booming suburbia, Edgerton hasn’t lost the essence of a traditional farm town. It has a huge intermodal facility but retains its old fashioned downtown, with simple brick buildings housing City Hall, a museum, post office and beauty parlor.

The Edgerton Library, housed in a former bank building dating from 1906, is a downtown anchor and a big part of that charm and character. It invites visitors in with its beautiful etched glass windows and gold-lettered signage proclaiming “Bank of Knowledge.”

“It’s just a sweet community Library where we know everybody. We know our patrons and they know us,” says Library Clerk Lynn Davis, who has lived south of town since 1992. She started out as a page at Edgerton and Gardner in April 2001.

For 2019, the Library was open 25 hours per week and served about 400 to 750 visitors per month, or an average of 25 to 35 patrons per day. They check out books and videos, use the computers, and enjoy the comfortable atmosphere. Teens especially like the gaming station.

“That building is such a part and parcel of the identity of our city,” says Edgerton Communications Manager Kara Banks.

Edgerton is unique among Johnson County Library’s 14 branches in that the Library system doesn’t own the building. Instead, the building is leased from the city.

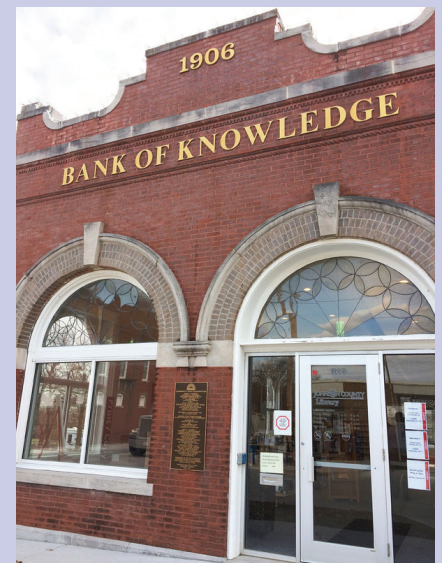
Edgerton had lacked library service since the early 1980s. In 1999, the city acquired the vacant bank building at 319 E. Nelson St., and

Johnson County Library agreed to a partnership. Many Edgerton citizens turned out to help gut the building and turn it into a wonderful Library space, which opened July 29, 2000. It was a community labor of love.

The Library at one time hosted Storytime and other programs but doesn’t now because many children have grown up and moved away, Keogh notes. Gardner and southern Johnson County continue to grow but Edgerton’s cozy Library space is right-sized for current demand.

The Library could get an extra boost, and more patron visits, thanks to city plans to enhance downtown. Edgerton officials have set aside \$4 million for a new community building on vacant land between the Library and the fire station.

The building’s design will be compatible with the Library. It will have a conference room and offices and will host community gatherings and luncheons, Boy and Girl Scout meetings and other events. It will also serve as the city’s emergency shelter. City officials hope it will open in summer 2021.



TOP HOLDS



JANUARY 2020

- **Once Upon a Time in Hollywood**
- **The Giver of Stars**
by Jojo Moyes
- **Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators**
by Ronan Farrow
- **Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About The People We Don't Know**
by Malcolm Gladwell
- **The Guardians**
by John Grisham
- **Dog Man: Fetch-22**
by Dav Pilkey
- **Abbey Road: The Anniversary Editions**
The Beatles
- **Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice**
- **Once Upon a Time in Hollywood**
- **Toy Story 4**
- **The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening**

PATRON SPOTLIGHT

Antioch Library Super Users



Todd and Paige Boyer, library super users

Todd and Paige Boyer and their kids can see Antioch Library from their living room window.

They frequently walk to the Library at 8700 Shawnee Mission Parkway, and those trips are a big part of how the family spends time together.

It's where 12-year-old Tess and 9-year-old Tyson developed a fervent love of books and became voracious readers.

"We borrow so many books. Our kids have access to so much here," Paige Boyer says. "We're not a screen family... This is their imaginative entertainment, reading."

Merriam has been home to Todd and Paige Boyer since 2002, and they are heavily invested in the community. Johnson County Library is a big part of that.

But their connection to libraries began with Kansas

City's Central Library, where Todd was an events coordinator from 2006 through 2014. He previously worked at the Hyatt-Crown Center and took his events planning expertise to the new Central Library, which opened in a former downtown bank building in 2004.

"That's where I realized the value of a Library system, how broad their reach can be beyond just facilitating resources," Todd now says.

Paige had been taking their toddler Tess to the Kansas City Library for Storytime, when she realized she could get the same services at Antioch. Tess loved Antioch Storytime with "Mr. Bradley," (Bradley Debrick, Johnson County's Early Literacy Coordinating Librarian).

Then Tyson came along and always enjoyed Storytime with "Miss Dorian," (Dorian Assenmacher, youth

information specialist at Antioch.)

As the children have grown, so has their Library connection. Tess did 4H gardening club activities at Antioch. Tyson did "Read to a Dog" at a different branch. The kids attend school near the new Lenexa City Center Library and go there on field trips. They followed Harry Potter events at various branches.

Paige enjoys Christian theology books and Todd reads about American history and current events. Tess and Tyson check out dozens of books each week.

"They always eye the new book shelf. They put books on hold themselves. We use the bookstore. They know their library card numbers. They are here at least once per week," Paige said.

Meanwhile, Todd got active in Merriam's zoning appeals board and planning

commission. He then served on the City Council from 2013 to 2015, where he was part of the planning for the Ikea store.

"For me, it was appealing to be a part of changing Merriam's brand," he said.

In 2015, Todd found a new way to serve the public, as an Olathe police officer, which he finds very fulfilling. In addition to her Mom duties, Paige is a part-time cytotechnologist, screening cellular specimens for cancer changes.

They both appreciate Johnson County Library's innovations, including new branches. Todd sees the Lenexa branch's synergy with the Civic Center as a great model, and looks forward to a new Library as part of Merriam's Community Center.

Still, he says Antioch Library will always be a cherished landmark for the family.

"This is a place," Todd says, "where our kids grew up."



9-year-old Tyson and 12-year-old Tess Boyer

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Library and Literary Passion

When Cassandra Gillig was growing up in a suburb of Chicago, she had a lot of late fines from her local Library. But that turned out to be a good thing.

Gillig became a teen volunteer at the Library to earn “fine forgiveness” and she really enjoyed the job.

She continued to work in Libraries while she earned a college degree in English and Women’s Studies. She also gained experience in writing, editing, independent publishing, designing poetry books and running reading series.

Now she’s putting all those skills to use as an Information Specialist at Leawood Pioneer.

Gillig, who was hired in December 2015 and lives in Kansas City’s Hyde Park neighborhood, devotes about half her time to helping Leawood patrons. The other half is devoted to two special projects: the annual Writers Conference and the teen literary arts magazine, *elementia*. They are ambitious initiatives that set Johnson County Library apart from other library systems.

“I feel really lucky because I am on these two incredibly unique writing projects,” Gillig said.

Gillig is part of the core team organizing the multi-day Writers Conference that attracts about 300 participants each fall. She says it’s unusual for a Library system to sponsor an excellent series of workshops, free of charge to the public, focusing on the craft rather than the business of writing.

“...we really want people to think about writing and the impact that words can have and how to become a better writer.”

“We’re a conference that focuses specifically on craft so we really want people to think about writing and the impact that words can have and how to become a better writer,” she said. “Our patrons are really eager to learn.”

Gillig assists Johnson County Reference Librarian Helen Hokanson with the planning and logistical details for the conference.

“She works quietly and diligently and keeps me on track,”

Hokanson said, adding that Gillig is an integral part of the Writers Conference’s success.

Gillig is also excited to oversee the layout and design of *elementia*, a full-color 65-page literary magazine that features outstanding work from local teen writers and artists. Johnson County Library publishes the teen-produced magazine each spring.

Gillig is bowled over by the quality of the submissions and says the poetry is some of the best she’s ever read.

“I think teenagers have

this really unfiltered vulnerability that they’re so willing to share, and they’re so eager and desperate to share because that’s what they need to get out into the world,” she said.

The magazine gets about 800 submissions and can only publish about 60, so the selection process is highly competitive. *elementia* also includes original artwork by area teens, that must be similarly juried.

“There’s like knock-out arguments as part of the editorial process about what gets to go in,” she said.

In her spare time, Gillig does her own writing, does some translations from Spanish to English, and plays guitar in several bands, including an all-girl punk band called Jelly.

She finds her Library work very rewarding.

“People love the Libraries here and they are willing to increase our funding,” she said. “I think people really understand and appreciate the work that we do.”



Cassandra Gillig, information specialist at Leawood Pioneer

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Happy Birthday Kansas!

Kansas officially became the 34th state on Jan. 29, 1861. Johnson County Library marked the 159th birthday with a series of family-friendly events in January titled “Celebrate Kansas:



Amanda Wahlmeier, local history Librarian and Brie ?????

No Place Like Home.”

“It’s to make people proud of this state,” said Local History Librarian Amanda Wahlmeier, who helped organize gatherings that featured birthday cake, historic games and stories about Kansas history.

A steady stream of parents and children showed up for the Jan. 9 event at Blue Valley Library and enjoyed testing their knowledge of the state bird (meadowlark), official insect (honeybee) and state flower (sunflower, of course).

Elysia Marcus brought her daughters Gabby, 6, and Gwen, 3, and said they were having such a good time they didn’t want to leave. “I’m born and bred in Kansas,” she said. “It’s cool to learn fun facts.”

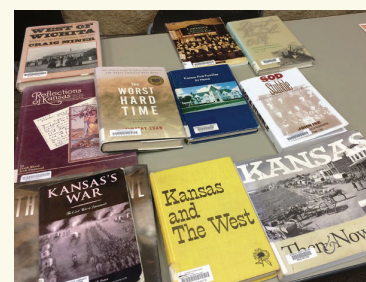


Gene T. Chavez, regional historian and curator

Keynote speaker Gene T. Chavez, a regional historian and curator, told the story of the “Vaqueros” (cowboys) and cattle barons who played a crucial role in cattle drives

from Texas to the East Coast that helped put Kansas on the map. His presentation revealed Kansas’ historical significance, through the beef industry, in the late 1800s development of the United States.

Johnson County Library will help residents explore their own family histories at another key event. Central Resource Library hosts a National Genealogy Day Open House March 7 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Art provides therapeutic winter respite

On a cold winter’s night in the midst of the hectic holiday season, a dozen Johnson County Library patrons took time to savor making something creative and fun.

The group gathered Dec. 18 for “Make Art, Not Worries,” at Central Resource Library. The event was hosted by Sherri Jacobs, a licensed therapist and founder of Heartland Art Therapy, based at InterUrban ArtHouse in Overland Park.



Sherri Jacobs, licensed therapist and founder of Heartland Art Therapy

Jacobs said her clients in winter often feel blue, and also guilty about not operating at a breakneck pace. She suggested ways for Library patrons to enjoy life’s slower winter rhythms.

With generously-donated art supplies, Jacobs invited participants to create collages, homemade signs or miniature booklets with affirmative, cheerful messages.

“The enjoyable thing about making art in a public place is people are often willing to share details about their creations with a group of strangers. Participants often leave feeling connected, heard, and inspired by others,” she said.

Workshop participants quickly got crafty. They eagerly shared ideas and compliments with each other.

Katie Johnson of Shawnee made a tiny booklet, or “Zine,” full of loving messages for



her 5-year-old daughter Claire.

Ashley Doty of Overland Park said she had a 9-month-old daughter at home. She found Jacobs’ program to be a welcome break from family obligations.

“She’s very giving of her supplies and her time,” Doty said.

Jacobs’ next workshop, on “speed friending” to combat loneliness, is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. March 17 at Central.

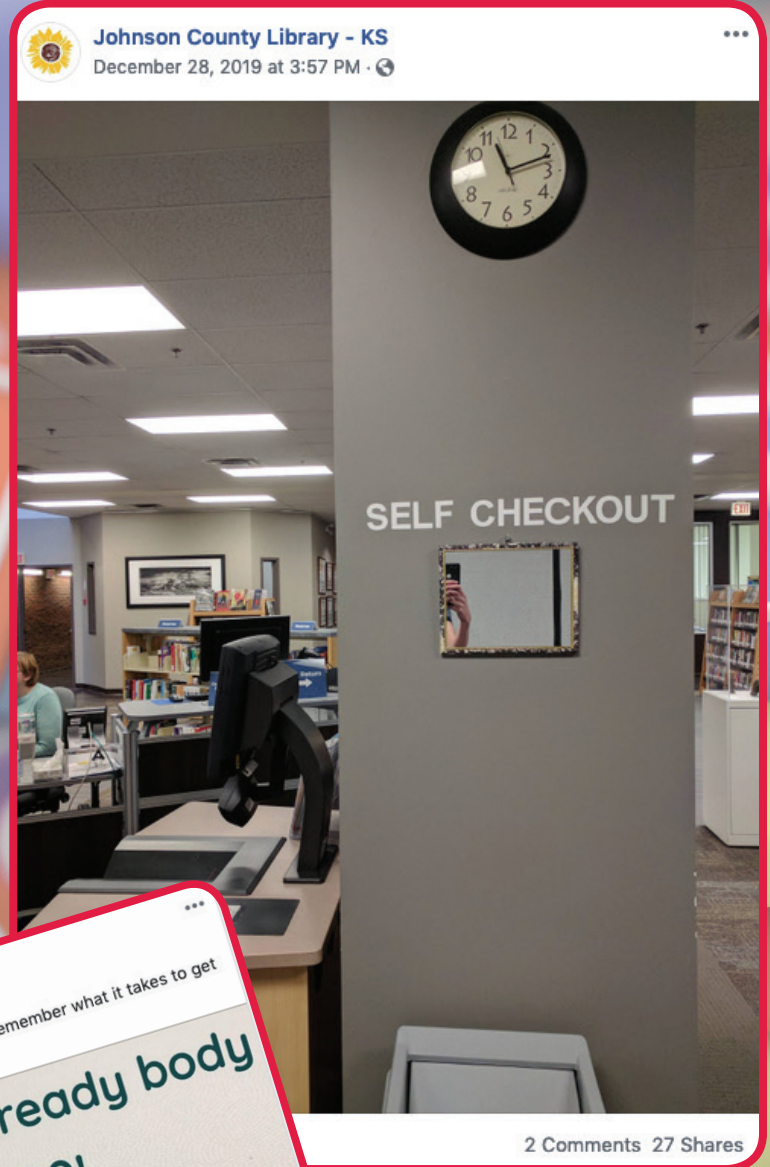
TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights



**CEDAR ROE
REOPENS!**

**NEW YEAR'S
GOALS?**



**SELF
CHECKOUT!**



Book Report

FEB 2020  VOLUME XII

Month in Review JANUARY 2020



Cedar Roe reopened after capital improvements. Branch manager Anna Gordon spoke to Fox 4 reporter Rebecca Gannon.



Popular storyteller Jo Ho Storytime appeared at Oak Park Library.



The Black & Veatch MakerSpace recycles odd bits of plastic for new projects.

The City Center Live series featured The Wires Alternative String Duo at Lenexa City Center Community Forum at Lenexa City Hall. This series is a partnership with the Lenexa Arts Council.



NEXT ISSUE

 **Cover Story:** CSSC Project

 **Branching Out:** Shawnee Library

 **Patron Spotlight:** Caleb...?

 **Staff Spotlight:** Melody Kinnamon, Information Specialist

 **Events:** Writers United, Legislative Coffee

JOHNSON COUNTY
KANSAS

Library

BOOK REPORT

A monthly publication for government officials and residents of Johnson County

9875 W. 87th Street
Overland Park, KS 66212
913.826.4600