



Book Report

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New Volunteer Coordinator Inspired by Library Volunteers

Amber Bourek Slater has worked for Kansas City area nonprofits for 15 years, including managing volunteers at Hope House, Harvesters and NourishKC.

Now she brings that expertise to Johnson County Library as the new volunteer services coordinator. She started in August and is full of enthusiasm for the job.

"The really awesome part is we have so many volunteers that are so dedicated and love the Library and the mission of the Library," Bourek Slater said. "There's a passion behind volunteering at the Library which I think is so exciting."

Bourek Slater realizes volunteers are a huge part of Johnson County Library's success. More than 700 active volunteers collectively contribute more than 50,000 hours per year to their duties. That's the equivalent of more than 25 full-time employees.

She says the volunteer program is already vibrant and engages many people

in two primary ways: helping at branches with circulation and other tasks, and helping the Friends of Johnson County Library organization with all its functions.

Bourek Slater has been inspired by volunteers like Lee Rowe, 86, who has helped out in Central's circulation area most Mondays and Fridays for nearly 20 years.

Rowe and her husband Ed lived 40 years in Emporia, where she served on the City Council and was Emporia's first woman mayor in the 1980s. They moved to Overland Park and became Library volunteers in 2002. After Ed died 18 months ago, Lee stayed active in the community and remained devoted to the Library work.

"As you get older you certainly need to socialize. In the last year and a half I realized how important it is to get out of the house and do things," she said. "We've met some interesting people here. The staff are real nice. Everybody is."

At Antioch, several teen volunteers provided invaluable help this past summer, according to Dorian Assenmacher, youth services specialist.

Jordan Lyerla, 17, a Blue Valley High junior, put her creative skills to use making wonderful displays and was great with the children, Assenmacher said.

And Esteban Alvarez, 19, a Shawnee Mission North senior, has volunteered over



Amber Bourek Slater, Volunteer Services Coordinator

200 hours at Antioch this year, including with the Library's bilingual program.

Alvarez moved to Johnson County from Colombia in 2018 and said he could barely speak English at first, but Library volunteering gave him confidence and job skills.

"It was amazing," Alvarez said. "I got to experience how the Library works and I was able to help the customers."

Bourek Slater hopes to make the volunteer program even more rewarding for participants. She's creating written materials to let volunteers know what's expected and how staff can support them. In 2020, she hopes to provide orientation training on a regular basis, possibly monthly.

She's spreading the word that more volunteers are needed for the MakerSpace and to help facilitate English Language Learners conversations.

She also wants to host some fun get-togethers. "Some of our volunteers are really looking for a social aspect to their volunteer experience," she said, "and they want to know more about the Library and the services we provide."

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Lee Rowe, library volunteer

BRANCHING OUT

Cedar Roe gets new manager, new roof and interior refresh

Cedar Roe Library is a well-loved neighborhood branch in Roeland Park, but it's in the midst of a two-month closure for roof repairs and other improvements.

The branch located at 5120 Cedar St. closed Oct. 29 and will reopen Dec. 30 at 9 a.m. This closure allows the Johnson County facilities management department to replace the flat portion of the Library roof that no longer drains properly.



"It's time to do it," said Juan Lopez-Tamez, Library architectural project manager for Johnson County government.

Crews will remove old roofing layers down to the decking and replace them, allowing the roof to once again slope a bit to facilitate drainage and stop leaks around windows and columns in the Library.

Cedar Roe also has a new manager. Anna Gordon has been an assistant branch manager at Monticello for about 18 months. She previously was an assistant branch manager with Mid-Continent Public Library. Gordon took over as Cedar Roe and Shawnee branch manager on Oct. 28.

The roof work is being done by Godard & Son Roofing Co. at a cost of \$58,391, well below the original \$100,000 estimate. The lengthy closure is needed because the process to submit the materials and work are complicated and required a third party approval and the roofers can't work when there's a threat of rain. It will be a noisy, disruptive job and the parking lot will be blocked off for equipment, so the decision was made to close the Library for the duration.

The closure allows time for a deep cleaning of Cedar Roe's interior, including shampooing the carpet and dusting thoroughly. Crews will also do some miscellaneous work, including replacing stained ceiling tiles, improving lighting, and painting doors where the paint has chipped away.

The Library is valued by long-time residents and young families from the nearby walkable residential neighborhoods, said assistant branch manager Alice Pierson, who is the Library's point person on this capital improvement project.

"My hope is that we're able to welcome them back and have a



Alice Pierson, Assistant Branch manager

fresh face on the Library," Pierson said. "We'll have things spruced up and make sure that the community understands that we're invested in the building and investing in our relationship with them."

Despite the roof leaks and the need for other repairs, the 50-year-old building is generally in very good shape, Pierson said.

It was built as a Library in 1969 and has a distinctive architectural character, with a pitched wood ceiling in parts of the building, large windows and lots of natural light. The design won the 1970 Medal Award presented by the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architecture for Excellence in Design. The pitched roof portion does not need to be replaced at this time.

In 2018 Cedar Roe welcomed 335 people per day on average and had a total of 95,496 visitors that year.

Cedar Roe's staff has worked hard to spread the word to patrons about the closure. Their holds for books and other materials during that time are available at Antioch, less than two miles from Cedar Roe. People who had reserved the meeting room were alerted to find alternate spaces until the end of the year. The Library's employees were reassigned to other branches during the closure.



TOP 10 HOLDS



OCTOBER 2019

- 522 Where the Crawdads Sing**
Delia Owens
- 520 The Guardians**
John Grisham
- 518 The Giver of Stars**
Jojo Moyes
- 444 The Dutch House**
Ann Patchett
- 386 Blue Moon**
Lee Child
- 345 The Night Fire**
Michael Connelley
- 303 Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About The People We Don't Know**
Malcolm Gladwell
- 294 Olive Again**
Elizabeth Strout
- 271 The Testaments**
Margaret Atwood
- 267 Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and A Conspiracy to Protect Predators**
Ronan Farrow

PATRON SPOTLIGHT

Artist finds Creative Outlet and Healing at MakerSpace

Eugenia Ortiz, an Overland Park artist, was at a crossroads in 2018. She was facing personal challenges. Professionally, she needed to expand into a new creative phase.

So she posted a question on Facebook. Did anyone know where she could access a machine that would help her with her new ideas requiring artistic cutting and etchings she wanted to do in Plexiglass and other materials?

Someone responded that she should check out the Black & Veatch MakerSpace, which provides free use of laser cutters, 3D printers, a CNC router, electronics equipment and other devices, at Central Resource Library.

Little did Ortiz know, but that answer has helped her profoundly, not only with her professional endeavors but even with emotional healing.

She first visited the MakerSpace in summer 2018 and was struck by how helpful staff facilitators Thomas

Maillieux, Brian Oertel and Nick Ward-Bopp were. She didn't know how to use the laser cutters, but they were accessible and willing to teach her.

"They're all very helpful," Ortiz said. "They're not there doing it for you. They are there teaching you, and then they let you take off. They really want you to become independent and know how to do this on your own."

Ortiz, who has a home studio, envisioned using sacred geometry symbols and crystal grid carvings in her artwork but needed a precision tool to help with that. The laser cutters worked perfectly.

"This opened up a whole new world of possibilities for me because sacred geometry symbols are so important. It's a universal language," she said.

She's been able to do engravings in acrylic and has also incorporated these geometrical designs into her jewelry and clothing creations. She has also

learned to use the 3D printer and vinyl cutter, and plans to branch out to wood and leather.

"I wouldn't have been able to do that," without the machines, she said. "They have helped me grow my career as an artist."

Ortiz, whose website is eugeniaortizart.com, also creates commissioned murals and paintings for private homes and commercial and corporate clients. Large paintbrushes allow her to paint unique strokes useful for murals. She has found the laser cutter is ideal for fashioning her own custom-made paint brushes.

Ortiz notes that laser cutters can cost as much as a car, and, in addition to the investment in such expensive equipment, proper ventilation systems are essential particularly when working with various materials. So the use of these MakerSpace devices, free of charge, has been invaluable.

Gradually, Ortiz realized that MakerSpace was not just helping her with her art. She enjoyed the camaraderie of the staff and other patrons of the facility. She felt welcomed and inspired. She started to feel better emotionally, and introduced other friends and artists to its resources.

"This was a positive distraction, a positive path with opportunities for creative growth," she said.

Ortiz usually visits twice per week for two-hour shifts. She's excited to continue learning and exploring all that the facility has to offer.

"I absolutely love the MakerSpace," she says. "It's been a refuge and a healing space to allow me to birth a new artistic version of myself. I am grateful to the professional staff and the Overland Park Central Resource Library for this opportunity to expand my artistic endeavors in a supportive and welcoming environment."



Eugenia Ortiz, artist and avid MakerSpace advocate

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Library Custodians Take Pride in Their Work

Spotless restrooms. Dust-free computers. Sparkling windows and pristine entryways.

Johnson County Library branches are generally clean, tidy and pleasant spaces, and a lot of the credit for that goes to custodians who mostly work out of sight of the patrons they serve.



Highly esteemed Johnson County Library custodians, often unseen, rated in top 5% in their field

They often toil late at night at a hard job, but they take great pride in making sure these heavily-trafficked public spaces stay spruced up, sanitized and healthy.

“When I first came to the Library, my first week here, I scrubbed the restroom down as hard as I could to get the floors as white as I could,” said custodian Ed Smith, who was hired earlier this year to work at Central Resource Library. “The book drop area, I buffed the area to make it shine a little bit and make it look nice. It does fill me with a sense of accomplishment.”

Smith has a new custodial assignment at Monticello Library. In his spare time, he repairs vendor booths at the Renaissance Festival, where his wife helps manage the Hearts Delight clothing booth.

At Blue Valley, Brian Cohen has been the custodian for five years. He enjoys working on his own, cleaning a large, intensely-used facility. It’s not just restrooms, vacuuming and trash. Cohen dusts bookshelves and furniture, scrubs handprints off glass windows and cleans lights and other nooks and crannies when needed.

“I know what to look for,” Cohen said. “I do a lot of cleaning that a lot of people would never notice.”

When he’s not at work, Cohen enjoys spending time with his

wife and daughter and frequents flea markets on weekends.

“They’re all hard working,” says Chay Her, interim custodian supervisor with Johnson County government. “We have really great teamwork and everybody supports each other.”

Eric Casaert has been a custodian at Antioch for eight years. A single dad of three teenagers, he liked the work schedule that allowed him to be with his kids during the day and evening.

“I have cleaned every Library – I’ve cleaned carpets in all the Libraries and deep cleaned all the restrooms in the libraries,” Casaert said.

Peggy Bristow worked for years in Johnson County Corrections before she became a custodian at Central three years ago. She spends much of her time sanitizing the public computers at the end of each day.

Smith, Cohen, Bristow and Casaert all appreciate the supportive, amiable Library work environment.

“The nice thing is, the staff is really good,” Casaert said.

Library custodians said they are pleased to have full-time jobs with good benefits. But the program is in transition. A few small branches have outsourced cleaning services. For the other branches, the Johnson County facilities department now oversees the Library custodians.

“Our custodian program has been rated in the top 5% in North America for what we do,” said Kevin Glur, support services manager with the facilities department. Placing the Library custodians under county oversight allows for standardized equipment and cleaning processes. The custodians’ schedule will generally be 3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., which will allow some overlap with the public and Library staff.

Glur is impressed with the Library custodians. “They’re real good,” he said. “I’m looking forward to pulling their knowledge in to help our program even get better.”



Custodian Brian Cohen

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Patrons find peace, restoration in mindfulness class

People's lives these days are so busy and stressful. But a one-hour gathering at Monticello Library on Saturday morning, Oct. 19, provided a compelling example of the restorative powers of "mindfulness."

Celestine Muhammad, a certified dynamic mindfulness teacher and co-founder of A Peace of Yoga Kansas City, led a small group in deliberative breathing, gentle body movements, and



Celestine Muhammad, certified dynamic mindfulness teacher

slow, purposeful eating.

It was the first of several classes that Muhammad is offering this fall for Johnson County Library as part of a program dubbed Mind Full or Mindful. The final session is scheduled at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 5 at Central Resource Library.

"The Library aims to be a place that helps people thrive, and to be well, and this was something we could offer," said Christin Devonshire, Library information specialist who helped coordinate the event.

Muhammad got her certification from the Niroga Institute in California and teaches the practice throughout the metro area.

"Mindfulness just invites us to be in the moment," she told participants, guiding them in ways to calm down, de-stress their bodies, and rewire their brains. "How we

breathe can actually change our mood."

Those in attendance said they felt relaxed and refreshed.

"I loved it," said Lauren Gosserand, who moved to the Monticello neighborhood a year ago and was making her first visit to the Library. "It really reminded me, even if I'm having a busy day, I can make the choice to center myself....I can make any moment a little less stressful."



Corinth patrons bond with food, fellowship at An Edible Discussion

Corinth Library doesn't have an oven or stove, but its popular program, An Edible Discussion, brings patrons together each month for a lively food talk and potluck supper.

On Nov. 4, about 35 people turned out for a presentation from Speckman Honey, a Shawnee-based honeybee operation. Owners John and Bev Speckman provide honey to Johnson County groceries, restaurants and even a Lawrence microbrewery.

"Predominantly this is clover honey. Clover honey is usually a light colored honey and a milder flavored honey," John Speckman said in describing his business's product. Speckman mesmerized his audience as he described the life of queen bees, drones and worker bees and how they are vital to pollination and food production.

Caitlin Perkins, information specialist at Corinth, has coordinated An Edible Discussion since 2014. Each month has a theme that inspires the potluck dishes.

It's not a cooking demonstration, but it educates patrons about the vibrant local food scene and builds community, Perkins said. Regulars have bonded and become friends over these meals while newcomers are always welcome even if they don't cook.

The Nov. 4 potluck featured honey-seasoned dishes including butternut squash, carrots, poached pears, cornbread, even homemade baklava.

Eddie Gutierrez saw a Facebook post about An Edible Discussion more than two years ago and comes regularly, often bringing friends.

"I learn about history. I learn about culture," he said. "I love to explore the world of food."

The Dec. 9 event features healthy brain foods information from the K-State Extension service.



TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights

PEOPLE LOVED OUR ALTERNATIVE TO
Disney +!

With the popular subscription service launching, librarians showed off the no-cost Disney entertainment available at Johnson County Library, and patrons loved it!



Johnson County Library - KS

November 14 at 8:38 AM · 🌐

We're making good use of the tubs in Collections right now.



No need to stump up the cash for yet another subscription service - your public library can provide most of your Disney needs at no cost! These are just a few examples of what you can borrow with your Library Card!



Month in Review November 2019

Librarians celebrated NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month)



"November is National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). Participants aim to write every day and to write at least 50,000 words in the month – that's roughly 1,667 words per day (or 11,669 words per week). Does it work? The books above began as #NaNoWriMo projects, so I'm pretty sure Ann Lamott was right: 'How to write: Butt in chair. Start each day anywhere. Let yourself do it badly. Just take one passage at a time. Get butt back in chair.'"

– Librarian Lisa

The season of gratitude began at Gardner Library



Kids wrote what they were thankful for on this colorful turkey

Kids showed off their collections:

Lenexa City Center Library shows off patron collections each month! Here are November's:

Sierra collects key chains from "everywhere she goes." Each one has a very special story behind it. She is sharing in the hopes of inspiring other young collectors. and Shelby, who collects Cabbage Patch Kids. All but one have belonged to other family members and she is so proud to be sharing the whole family with us.



NEXT ISSUE

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-  **Branching Out:** Antioch Library
-  **Patron Spotlight:** Jim Sharpnack, Monticello Patron
-  **Staff Spotlight:** Beth Atwater, fiction buyer
-  **Events:** Writers Conference Kids Day and Royal Winterfest

JOHNSON COUNTY KANSAS Library

BOOK REPORT

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