



Book Report

APR 2020  VOLUME XIV

From the County Librarian

Dear Johnson County Library supporter,

I hope this finds you in good spirits during a challenging time. I am writing to personally assure you how thankful I am to have your continued interest in and support of Johnson County Library. Our staff members are safely working from home to ensure the best-possible continuation of our services during this time of Shelter in Place, and when we are able to reopen our branches.

At this time none of us know how long we are asked to serve the public without our key assets: our buildings, and our collections. Until we can guarantee the safety of our users, we won't be hosting visitors or circulating physical materials. Fortunately we have a wealth of materials and resources available online, with your Library card and free of charge, for users of all ages. No Library card? No problem! Signing up for an eCard takes just a few minutes at jocolibrary.org/elibrary.

- With nearly 45,000 titles currently available, our eLibrary collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks is always expanding and has something for every interest. Take advantage of spring weather with downloadable gardening books for both kids and adults.
- Think in new ways about what you are reading, watching or listening to – add a review of your favorite book, movie or album in the Opinions section at the bottom of the item's entry in our online catalogue. For example, scroll to the bottom and click Add Comment on the left! Check out this example: *The Secret Garden*.
- Keep up to date on local, national, and international current events

with our collection of eMagazines and eNewspapers.

- For students navigating a new world of remote learning, we offer Homework Help for both Teens and Kids, including Brainfuse tutoring, Encyclopedia Britannica and Khan Academy, among many others.
- Younger library users and their families can still access many of our 6 by 6 resources from home, attend virtual storytimes and watch finger-plays and other videos that encourage reading together.

We will continue to remain connected with you through phone, paper mail, email and social media outlets. We're eager to let you know how the Library continues to serve the needs of our community, volunteers and staff. Here's just a few notable actions we're taking:

Externally:

- We've listed COVID-19 information resources on our website so patrons can stay up to date.
- We've extended due dates and suspended fines during the Stay-at-Home orders.
- We've cancelled public programs at or sponsored by the Libraries through May 31.
- Patrons can still submit questions through our Answers web portal, which is staffed by Librarians and Information Specialists Monday - Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 - 5 p.m.

Internally:

- Our IT team worked around-the-clock to deploy laptops and iPads so staff can work remotely.
- Library couriers helped the Department of Health and Human



Sean Casserley, County Librarian

Services deliver Meals on Wheels to residents in need.

- The Black & Veatch MakerSpace staff are making and donating masks to healthcare workers.
- Our leadership teams have been planning for getting back to full services for the remainder of 2020.

Visit our website to see all the ways we continue to realize our vision to create an environment for people to learn, to explore, to enjoy, to create, to connect. I continue to wish you all the best and am eager to see you once again at the Library.

Sincerely,
Sean Casserley
County Librarian



BRANCHING OUT

Library A Big Draw in Lenexa City Center

Since it opened June 2, 2019 Johnson County's newest Library branch has become an integral part of Lenexa's City Center campus. The \$21.1 million Lenexa Library, at 8778 Penrose Lane, is in close proximity to City Hall, the Rec Center, the aquatic center, new businesses and apartments.

City spokeswoman Denise Rendina says people visit the Library and discover the Farmers Market and the Public Market. Or they come to City Hall and discover the Library. "It's the excitement of having another civic component on this campus," she said. "I'll walk out every day and see, it warms my heart, little kids with a pile of books."

This is Branch Manager Ken Werne's ninth location in 27 years with Johnson County Library. "The thing I like about this building is it's been designed for the future," he said. He particularly loves the atrium, filled with contemporary furniture and three dramatic mosaic murals by children's book illustrator Stephen T. Johnson.

At 40,000-square-feet on two levels, Lenexa is much larger than the 17,000-square-foot Lackman branch that it replaced, and has a larger collection. Patrons loved Lackman but Werne says they are embracing the new facility.

"Things have been going well," Werne said. "The numbers get higher every month."

From June 2019 through January 2020, Lenexa counted 154,407 user visits to its building and 10,957 in its drive-thru. That compares to 148,167 user visits to Lackman between June 2018 and January 2019.

Assistant branch manager Kristen Holdman-Ross appreciates the staff work space and sophisticated automated sorting system. "Our circulation work room really lends itself to the teamwork that happens back there," she said.

Youth Services Librarian Dawna Ofstehage says Storytimes are hugely popular, in a room specifically designed for that purpose. The Library's top floor is spacious, vibrant and kid-friendly. "You have lots of places for studying and for parents to work on computers and still see what their kids are doing," she said.

owners. These spaces make the branch a major community gathering spot.

- Twenty public computer work stations, plus laptop lending, allowing people to check out laptops for use in the building.

Lenexa Library also launched a "silent" book group in January. Information specialist Matt Crist started it in Gardner and it migrated to Lenexa with him. Participants each bring a book and talk briefly about their selections. Then they read quietly together. They meet at the Public Market, where they can also enjoy a glass of wine or coffee and a snack. "It's a great way to carve out some reading time in your schedule," Crist said.

The Library also partners on arts programming with the Lenexa Arts Council, which Rendina says is mutually beneficial. A one-year anniversary celebration is in the



TOP HOLDS



MARCH 2020

BOOKS-FICTION:

- **Such a Fun Age** by **Kiley Reid**
- **American Dirt** by **Jeanine Cummins**
- **Dear Edward** by **Ann Napolitano**

BOOKS-NON-FICTION:

- **A Very Stable Genius: Donald J. Trump's Testing of America** by **Philip Rucker**
- **The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family and Defiance During the Blitz** by **Erick Larson**

CD AUDIO BOOKS, FICTION, NON-FICTION:

- **Youth Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About the People We Don't Know** by **Malcolm Gladwell**
- **The Dutch House** by **Ann Patchett**

YS BOOKS:

- **The Call of the Wild** by **Jack London**
- **Little Women** by **Louisa May Alcott**
- **New Kid** by **Jerry Craft**



Lenexa's Kids section is bright and colorful

Among the Library's amenities:

- A drive-thru service window, detached from the building in the parking garage.
- A holds lobby with extended hours. Patrons can get a pass to obtain materials from 5-9 a.m. and 8-10 p.m., when the rest of the Library is closed.
- Meeting rooms with audio-visual capabilities that are heavily used by non-profits, neighborhood associations and small business



Lenexa Library branch manager Ken Werne in front of a mosaic by children's book illustrator Stephen T. Johnson

PATRON SPOTLIGHT

Spring Hill User: Engineer, Pilot, Writer

Johnson County Library patron Brian Eastman is a busy guy.

He and his wife have four boys, ages 4-16, and maintain a home and 30 chickens on eight acres just outside of Paola.

He's an engineer at Garmin in Olathe, integrating Garmin's radios into manufacturers' aircraft. He's a pilot, does blacksmithing projects and enjoys tinkering with old Jeeps. And he's penned one self-published young adult novel, *Tail Feathers*, about a growing boy with wings. He's working on a sequel he hopes will be picked up by a publisher.

Eastman especially appreciates Johnson County Library's programs for aspiring writers at the Central branch. He also frequents the Spring Hill branch, conveniently on his drive home from Olathe to Miami County. "Paola has a small library," Eastman said. "Johnson County Library is so much larger and the book selection is bigger and their link to other Libraries is also better. So we have a better network to find books not only for me but for my sons."

When he was a teenager in southeast Missouri, a family friend flew Eastman to St. Louis to visit the McDonnell Douglas aerospace plant, which sparked his fascination with aviation. In college, he learned to fly and studied aviation technology. After working for Cessna in Independence, Kan., he got the Garmin job 16 years ago.

Flying small planes provides amazing views of sunsets, the horizon, and the "patchwork quilt" of the prairie, he says. When his sons were younger he enjoyed taking them on "\$100 hamburger runs," spending \$100 on gas to fly to small airport hamburger joints.

College is also where Eastman started writing. "Back then the internet was connected with a 2400 baud modem," Eastman said, recalling that text-based adventure games had no graphics but

ignited players' imaginations. "Through those games you could build a character and end up writing stories about them and sharing stories back and forth." Eventually he wrote *Tail Feathers*, using his pilot's knowledge to enhance the plot and characters.

Family took priority after his fourth son was born, but he resumed writing two years ago. He's part way through his second novel. "It's been workshopped quite a bit," he said. "It's pretty mature, especially the first part." Helpful guides, he said, include "The Emotional Craft of Fiction," by Donald Maass and "Wired for Story," by Lisa Cron.

He hopes to finish the manuscript by the end of this year. Eastman said

he's gotten constructive criticism at Johnson County Library's annual Writers Conferences and also at the monthly Writers United gatherings.

"For me, the interesting feedback comes from other writers who are not writing in my genre," he said. "They have a different point of view, a different perspective in how they interpret the character."

Eastman praises Library staff.

"Staff puts in quite a bit of work to support writers, and I'd love to see more people showing up at Writers United," he said. "I'd just love to get the word out. I try to spread the word with any writer I run across."



Central and Spring Hill library Patron Brian Eastman: engineer, pilot, blacksmith, and writer

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

New Staffer Bridges Libraries and Schools

Johnson County Library is known for excellent early literacy services. It has vibrant programs for teens. Now, a newly-hired staffer will bolster relationships with elementary schools and enhance library offerings for elementary-aged children, to sustain and cultivate their enthusiasm for reading.

Melanie Fuemmeler, a veteran public school teacher and instructional coach, started Jan. 6 in the new position of Elementary Coordinating Librarian. “As kids go into school, sometimes the love of reading gets lost,” she said, noting that elementary-aged students can be intimidated by test scores and other challenges. “That’s a critical piece, to keep that age a library user and not fall off the mark there.”

She will be a liaison to Johnson County schools as well as develop robust library events and programming. She envisions “6 by 6 Through 6th,” building on the 6 by 6 early reading program to benefit kids through sixth grade. “We could take these early literacy skills and start to have story hour or reading clubs at the elementary level that capitalize on these six skills too,” she explained.

She’s enjoyed getting to know Youth Services staff at the library branches and has started reaching out to school teachers and librarians as well. “I’m excited for the team I get to vision with, and building those connections with the YS staff and ultimately the community at large,” Fuemmeler said.

Gary Strout, library media specialist at Broken Arrow Elementary, praises the partnership. He said schools have always appreciated Johnson County Library and its many resources, but having a point person specifically dedicated to working with them will be particularly beneficial. “Reading is one of our big focuses,” he said. “So she can help with that.”



New librarian Melanie Fuemmeler, Elementary School Coordinator

Fuemmeler brings 16 years of public school experience to the job. She taught grades 3-6 in the North Kansas City District and was an elementary instructional coach in Park Hill. She also developed a project called KC Kids Unite that connects children in urban and suburban classrooms to break down barriers of race and geography. Johnson County Library has been a part of that initiative.

Fuemmeler lives in Kearney, Mo., and has a 5-year-old daughter and a 4-year-old son. They all love to read together. She’s also an enthusiastic runner of half-marathons and an avid live theater patron.

Johnson County Library’s summer programming was already in the works when Fuemmeler came on board, but

she’s planning a few pilot summer projects to reach reluctant readers. For the fall, Fuemmeler hopes to set up some author visits for elementary-aged youth and some STEAM (science/tech/engineering/arts/math) story hours. She’s also working to create intergenerational programming that can engage both parents and kids.

She’s excited about all the possibilities. “What I have been afforded in the library system is the freedom to think and grow ideas beyond many measures that are rooted more in testing and achievement,” she said. “We are really being able to bring about resources, engage the community and reach that broader audience.”

EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Teen Advisory Councils Give Valuable Feedback

Johnson County Library makes a concerted effort to provide books and services that appeal to teens. Its Young Adult Literary Councils are a big part of that.

On Feb. 15, seven teens, ages 13-18, gathered for the Monticello branch's regular monthly meeting. Bonding over pizza, they recommended books other teens would enjoy, brainstormed on fun activities to offer this year, and did

awareness about teen suicide prevention.

It's a great group, says Julia Belcher, Monticello Youth Information Specialist. "They are our sounding board," she said. "We are testing out ideas for programs...It's really helpful to have a teen perspective."

Other teen literary councils are at Leawood, Lenexa, Blue Valley and Gardner.

The best part, several teens said, is Johnson County's participation in a Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) program to review books before publication. Johnson County was one of just 16 Library systems chosen nationally for the 2019-2020 term.

Olathe West High School sophomore Jack Flannery said it's a great opportunity to build his personal library. "I was very interested to hear that I could read books before they got published," he

said. "We review them online through YALSA...We have opinions that do have influence on the final draft."

Belcher said Johnson County teens get experience using a critical voice, while publishers get crucial teen feedback. The advisory council program is fun and important, participants agreed. "Free pizza, free books and volunteer credit," said Flannery, summing up what makes it all worthwhile.



Young Adult Literary Council members choosing some books other teens might enjoy



Youth Services Librarian Julia Belcher

Author Tosca Lee Encourages Aspiring Writers

After a Johnson County Library patron recommended bringing best-selling Nebraska author Tosca Lee to town, Reference Librarian Helen Hokanson was delighted that Lee was willing to do six events over two days.

"I'm always looking for someone who will do writing workshops," Hokanson said,

commending Lee for being generous with her time and advice.

Lee is known for historical and Biblical fiction, plus co-authoring fantasy with Ted Dekker. She appeared at Antioch, Lenexa, Leawood and Central Libraries as well as at Our Daily Nada in River Market and Write Central in Gladstone. Topics included how to write unforgettable characters, do research and overcome fear.

Lee is invigorated by her author visits. "I get to see amazing Libraries because Libraries are about more than books these days," she said, adding that she loves the chance to connect with her readers.

On Feb. 21 at Lenexa City Center, Lee spent three hours with an enthusiastic group of aspiring writers, outlining "10 Secrets of a Bestseller." She didn't sugarcoat the fact that it requires very hard work. It also requires great storytelling, many revisions, and a fierce

commitment to both the craft and business of writing.

Lee told the group it took years to get her first book, *Demon: A Memoir*, published. The writer's life includes rejection, but she provided tips for navigating that minefield. "It's a journey," she said. "There will be many ups and downs."

Participant Caleb Lang said her guidance was invaluable. "She's great," he said. "It's awesome."



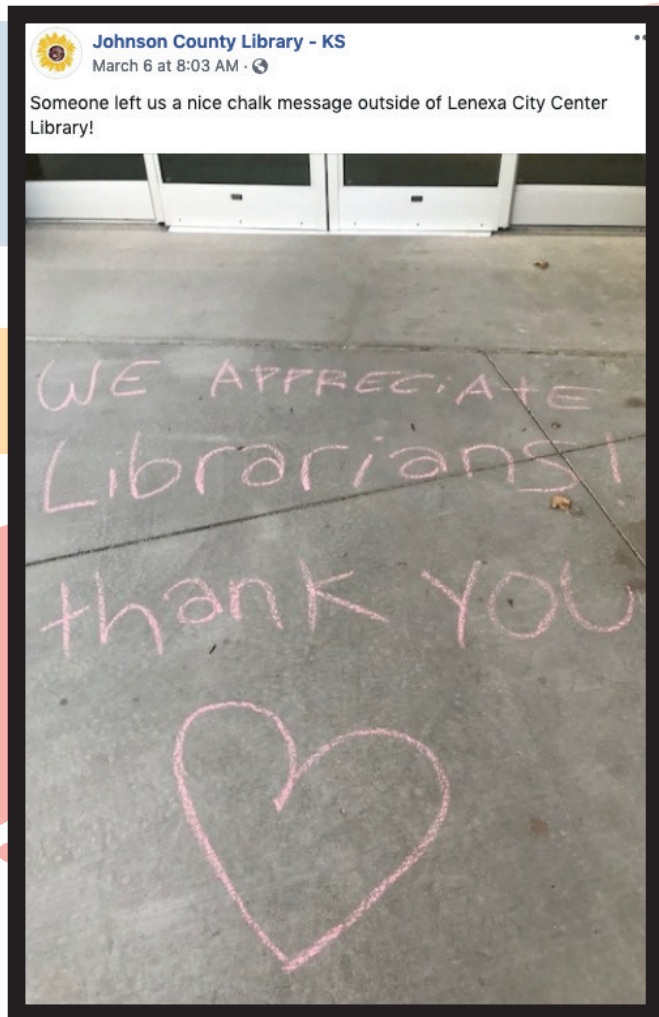
Best-selling Nebraska author Tosca Lee, center



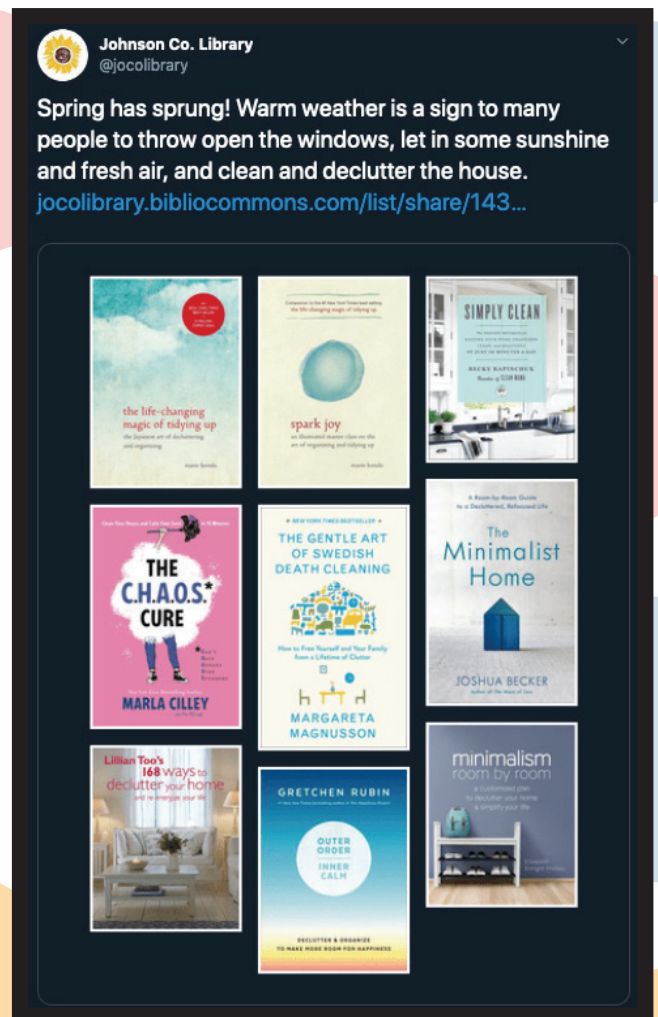
Tosca Lee outlining her "10 Secrets of a Best Seller" to a group of aspiring writers

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Social Media Highlights



A nice chalk message left at Lenexa City Center Library



Our Spring Cleaning booklist got lots of clicks to the web catalog for help with decluttering



We got almost 100 comments on our weekly "what are you reading" post



Month in Review MARCH 2020

Some of the events that took place in March...



An Edible Discussion **Monday, Mar 9, 2020** **Corinth Library**

This popular meet-up included a potluck dinner and group discussion about cookbooks, cooking and, of course, food. Each month features a specific nationality or type of cuisine, with discussions led by special guest speakers who are food professionals. You can share new or favorite dishes, test others' creations, learn about new expert techniques and discuss food with other foodies.



Connect with Em-PAW-ty **Saturday, Mar 7, 2020** **Gardner Library**

People and animals have feelings in common. This interactive presentation helped attendees appreciate similarities and differences in pet and human brains, emotions and social chemistry. Everyone left the session with a greater understanding of empathy that will help to better connect with animals and each other. It was designed especially for the Library and presented by Ashley Stanley of Wayside Waifs. One or more trained companion animals attended with the presenter.

Tobacco Treatment Specialist Drop-Ins **Tuesday, Mar 10, 2020** **Central Resource Library**

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Johnson County Department of Health and Environment can help you learn the risks and meet your goals. Attendees met one-on-one with a certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist.

College and Career Planning **Tuesday, Mar 10, 2020** **Lenexa City Center Library**

Planning for the expense of a college education can be overwhelming and intimidating. Jason Anderson, a Lecturer in the KU-Edwards' BBA program, discussed the college admissions and financial aid landscape to help attendees lessen the worry.



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March 2020

JOHNSON COUNTY
KANSAS

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