



# GROWING A DYNAMIC LIBRARY FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

## Springfield-Greene County Library District 2021–2022 Annual Report



I feel a great sense of excitement about your Springfield-Greene County Libraries. The staff has made great strides this year in taking The Library into neighborhoods where you live, and the steps we've taken to foster early literacy and create an even more exciting place to explore your dreams.

Library staff, administrators and Board of Trustees began Fiscal Year 2021–2022 by embarking on a deep study of our community's needs and the most effective ways we can use public and private support to help address them.

The months-long process took into account the ideas shared with us in community listening sessions and staff discussions with patrons and community partners. The Red Flags and Blue Ribbons outlined in the most recent Community Focus Report help drive our discussions. We also took a critical look at how to protect and build the Library District's finances to remain healthy and innovative in the future.

Over the last fiscal year, our planning efforts focused on three priorities. They represent our commitments to you, our patrons and supporters: Improve access to services for all citizens of Greene County, enhance the total user experience, and strengthen fiscal resources.

Those priorities informed the steps that we launched in Fiscal 2021–2022, and steps we are committed to pursue into 2025 toward building a strong library for the future. We invite you to come along with us as we grow an ever-more dynamic library for everyone in Greene County.

Regina Greer Cooper  
Executive Director

### 2021–2022 Library Board of Trustees



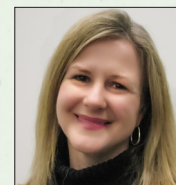
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**Our Mission:** Building a stronger community by enabling lifelong learning and enrichment

**Our Vision:** A thriving library that is an integral part of the lives of the community

**Our Core Values:** Synergy • Empowerment • Respect • Innovation • Inclusion • Confidence • Excellence



**OUR COMMITMENT: IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR ALL CITIZENS OF GREENE COUNTY**

The Library strives to give the 298,915 Greene County residents easy access to library services, regardless of age, interest or abilities. Library cards — free to all county residents — offer everything from WiFi hot spots to computer training classes, help for job seekers and an expansive collection of traditional and digital books, movies and music. Caring staff take an active role in their library neighborhoods to understand their needs and make sure services are provided equitably across the 10 branches and Mobile Library.

First among the Library’s responsibilities is to help build literacy skills and inspire a life of reading.

**Summer Reading Program**

Amazing things happen when you invite young people to be part of a reading community. A small child who is read to by an adult learns early to recognize letters and words. A struggling reader gains confidence. The program promotes a love of reading by encouraging youth to read materials they choose. Summer reading is proven to prevent the “summer slide” in kids’ reading skills. And it promotes family connections by involving parents and siblings in reading activities. While participation remained low due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2,889 infants, tiny tots, children and teens participated in the program, Tails and Tales, logging minutes and earning books and prizes from nine area businesses and attractions.

Summer Reading To Go, meanwhile, took the summer storytimes and activities to 5,716 children, teens and adult family members to outreach sites across the county.

Over 900 adults also stepped up to participate in their Summer Reading Challenge, with 229 completing the challenge to claim their I ♥ My Library water bottle. Readers and finishers, alike, read a total of 4,160 books. The Friends of the Library generously funded gift cards for 40 winners in the end-of-summer drawing.

**609,311 total materials**

**446,871 physical materials;**

**162,440 digital materials**

**2,889 infants, tiny tots, children and teens, read**

**2,035,140 minutes during Summer Reading Program**



Lauren Blackmon shared this post on the Library Center Facebook page on July 26: “The summer reading program has been great for my kiddos. My daughter made dinner tonight using a recipe from her recent book. That’s a win-win for me!”



Curtis Thomas tagged the Library in posts on Instagram and Twitter celebrating his son’s first library card: “First @springfieldlib library card! Welcome to the first day of the rest of your life, Lou.”

- Other reading programs throughout the year:
- **Winter Reading Challenge** The 2022 Winter Reading Challenge inspired 535 adults to read or listen to at least five titles from a list of 15 categories in January through February. Those who completed the challenge earned the distinction “Winter Reading Master” and received a limited-edition coffee mug.
  - **The Community One Read** The annual one book, one community celebration — the One Read — in spring 2022 inspired teens and adults to read “The Vanishing Half” by author Brit Bennett, who entertained an overflow crowd in person at the Library Center.
  - **Library Takeout Kits** Still taking precautions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, families needed ways to keep their kids and teens reading at home with books and activities. Library Youth Services staff developed popular Takeout Kits — simple materials for activities tapping themes such as STEAM, history, handcrafts and literacy — paired with books and book recommendations.



Tammy Tam submitted this photo of Myra, age 3, showing off her spring chick Library Takeout craft.



Bestselling author Brit Bennett drew some 150 attendees to the Library Center in April 2022 to hear her talk about “The Vanishing Half” and the themes it raised, from the complicated mother-daughter relationships of sisters Stella and Desiree Vignes, to “the absurdities of racism.” Bennett shared the stage in an in-depth, interview-style discussion with Dr. Ashley Payne, an Educational Psychologist and Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at Missouri State University.

**8,089 Takeout Kits distributed through community outreach sites**

**1,073 Racing to Read Storytimes in branches, 11,010 participants**

**504 storytimes at Racing to Read To Go community outreach sites, 8,303 participants**

*“One of our patrons at Turner’s Station wanted to make sure I passed along that her teenage daughters are using the Take Out kits to socialize with neighbors. There’s an elderly woman down the street and a disabled woman, and they take the kits and/or adult craft kits down to their neighbors. The mother said in particular ‘It’s interesting to see the ripple effects that are coming out of these kits as the girls make new connections. So make sure to pass along a thanks for putting the kits together.’”*

— Mary Ragain, Mobile Library Outreach Assistant



Improving access also involves expanding community, corporate and neighborhood partnerships to serve those unable to go to a brick-and-mortar library, and to underserved populations including non-readers, non-English speakers and library non-users.

Through our relationships with existing partners, we learned where and how librarians could do the most good. Non-English speakers practiced their skills during Conversation Circles. The Heirloom Seed Library, with free packet checkouts, enabled residents and community gardens to be more food self-sufficient. With our partners, we combined skills to serve an even broader audience that welcomed us at sites outside the traditional library setting.

**Library Outreach: The Library Without Walls**

A green canvas wagon brimming with library books for kids appears at the Strafford Moonlight Movies in the Park. Kids and families take note and sample the offerings. It’s just another successful visit from the Pop-Up Library, staffed by Library Outreach Department workers. In its first among many outings, the Pop-Up Library made visits to the Strafford park and Silver Springs Park in Springfield. The little library on wheels, along with an activities table and display rack for take-home materials, were funded with a grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation.

Staff and volunteers also deliver books and other library materials to the homes of people through Walking Books. People who can’t travel to a library due to a physical condition receive a delivery of items matching their preferences once a month.

Families visited 17 sites for a StoryWalk® through partnerships with Republic and Springfield schools and parks. StoryWalks® allow visitors to read the pages of popular storybooks posted along a walking path. StoryWalks® also popped up at the Strafford City Park and Silver Springs Park.

Concerns about COVID-19 prompted many people to look to the outdoors, so that’s where we headed, partnering throughout the months with the Springfield-Greene County Park Board and the Republic Parks and Rec Department to provide librarian-led family Stories in the Park. Staff also provided on-location, virtual storytimes that summer at the Springfield Art Museum, Dickerson Park Zoo, Springfield Conservation Nature Center and Republic’s J.R. Martin Park.

The Library played a role in community building in other ways:

- Library Youth Services staff joined the **Springfield Public Schools Elementary’s Science Olympiad**,



**The Pop-Up Library on wheels makes a welcome stop.**

*“Thank you so much! Y’all are such a godsend for me. I’m disabled & unable to drive the last few years. I can’t ride public transportation, so I miss out on almost everything. I really miss being able to go to museums and parks and such. But I am a voracious reader — so your service is amazing. And y’all are so kind, too. Thank you...”*

— Walking Books patron Sherri Garner



**A Family discovers a StoryWalk® in the park.**

teaching kids how to make 3D pyramids with Strawbees and connectors.

- In a new series Stories Together, the Library partnered with **Springfield Public Schools’ Parents as Teachers** parent educators to share stories and activities with children, and share ideas with parents.
- The Library took part in hosting the online **2021 Community Focus Report** and provided reliable information for the public. As part of that effort, library staff redesigned the report’s website to provide an online space for nonprofit organizations and government agencies to release updated information to the public in a more timely fashion.
- The Library Center hosted a Drug Take Back Day with the **DREAM Coalition** of pharmacists and community partners. The collection netted 16 boxes of prescription drugs weighing 373 lbs., for proper disposal. A second Drug Take Back Day event at the Library Station was able to collect and dispose of 157 pounds of drugs.
- **The Springfield-Greene County Health Department** and Jordan Valley Community Health Center offered a series of free, public COVID-19 vaccine clinics at all library branches, which also served as distribution sites for tens of thousands of COVID-19 test kits.
- Library staff partnered with **Harmony House** to create a booklist from the Library’s collection targeted to families that have experienced family violence or sexual abuse, and includes titles for children, teens and adults.



**Library Outreach Department staff deliver Memory Kits to residents at assisted living facilities such as Lakewood and the Arbors Assisted Living & Memory Care, sharing Memory Bags with books and photos to “bring good memories back to life,” said patron Mary Kay Rice.**

**60 facilities visited (assisted living, care centers, treatment facilities), 636 deliveries of 28,260 library materials**

**1,306 stops by the Mobile Library, 8,324 patrons served, 39,960 materials delivered**



**Andrea Harp shared this note and photo via Messenger:**

**“Hello Springfield Library. My twin 6-year-old daughters and I recently enjoyed your StoryWalk at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park. Needless to say the StoryWalk really piqued both of their interests and offered an inclusive way for each of them to join together in an interactive reading adventure. Thank you for offering content like this! It was especially meaningful to my girls as one of my daughters has cerebral palsy, meaning she requires a wheelchair for her mobility. It’s not often that we find activities that both of them can engage in. This was one of them. We look forward to trying this accessible activity in the future!”**



OUR COMMITMENT: ENHANCE THE  
TOTAL USER EXPERIENCE

How do you use The Library? A young family may visit storytime to learn ways to encourage early reading skills with their toddler. A teen may have a meet-up with study partners and catch an anime film. Others come for a book club. Hundreds come for free concerts sponsored by the Friends of the Library, like the annual Springfield Symphony Orchestra’s “Symphony in the Stacks.” Adults were treated to useful series such as iPhone for Seniors; an evening with humor author David Sedaris at the Historic Gillioz Theater sponsored by the Friends of the Library; and a celebration of the horror genre featuring Grady Hendrix and Stephen Graham Jones. Others learned how to “eat from the backyard” from foraging expert Bo Brown during the spring series Rooted in the Ozarks. The Library Station expanded the universe for others during programs and an interactive exhibit: Exoplanets, the Search for Alien Earths, presented by NASA’s Universe of Learning and the Space Science Institute’s National Center for Interactive Learning.

The Library’s challenge is to enhance the experiences that all our patrons have come to expect at their library, no matter their age or interests.

Imagine it. Design it. Create it at the Maker Space

What will you make today? It could be anything when you’re at the Maker Space below the Midtown Carnegie Branch Library. Grant funded and ever-busier with makers since it opened in 2020, the Maker Space hosts orientation classes and create-it sessions for all ages. From vinyl lettering and decals to laser-engraved signs, 3D printing, a soldering station and photo slide and movie converter, we say the only limit is your imagination. Engrave your sports team’s hangers, sure. Create a 3D castle, absolutely. Convert your old film negatives to usable photos, yes. Interested makers can take a video tour at [thelibrary.org/makerspace](http://thelibrary.org/makerspace), or call 417-837-5011 to register for an in-person tour or classes.

Business Connect: Library Solutions for Your Business Needs

Business Connect is a program that Library staff built through in-house training and partnerships with business and entrepreneurial contacts. Whether you’re starting a new business or working to grow an existing one, staff can connect individuals with library tools and community resources. Regular virtual and in-person training programs were offered by leaders such as the Small Business Administration and Southwest Missouri SCORE. Company tours provided a behind-the-scenes look at Mother’s Brewing Company.

1,857 total programs; 39,599 total attendance  
817 adult programs; 10,330 attendance  
37 young adult programs; 1,043 attendance  
1,003 children’s programs; 28,226 attendance



“We had a great group of adventure-seeking book lovers for our rock climbing edition of the Outdoor Adventure Book Club. After discussing the book ‘The Impossible Climb’ by Mark Synott, patrons braved the rock walls at Zenith Climbing Center with a helpful belay from Springfield Greene-County Park Board staff. Many of the participants had never been rock climbing before and were super grateful for the opportunity to do so. Everyone had a blast and many participants expressed that they hoped that the Outdoor Adventure Book Club would be back in the near future!”

— Haley White, Library Station Reference Manager

21,675 total room bookings by the public;  
100,640 attendance

ENHANCING THE DIGITAL USER  
EXPERIENCE

- Some library users never enter our physical doors, but they take advantage of the many digital services available to them: downloading books through Libby, streaming movies with Hoopla, learning a foreign language with Mango, or researching a potential business opportunity on our electronic databases. The role of The Library grows in an increasingly virtual world.
- Over 3,000 popular magazines became available to download and read for free on any device 24/7 with the Libby reading app and a library card. Digital magazines have no wait lists or holds, do not count towards checkout limits and allow readers to renew their selections. All titles automatically expire on due dates, with no late fees.
  - The Library enabled patrons who wanted to register for a library card but couldn’t come in person. They could go online and enter their information, email address and submit electronic copies of their ID and proof of Greene County residence. It enhanced service for patrons with limited mobility, non-residents and those solely wanting to use the online resources.



- A new, digital website, [showmemo.org](http://showmemo.org), tells the stunning and sometimes tragic stories of Missouri and Missourians through the lens of historically and culturally significant objects, and with critical interpretation by historians and others. The project is a collaboration of historians, archivists, librarians, and students across the state.

- The Local History & Genealogy Department staff launched a project to digitize images from the Springfield News-Leader’s print and negative collection. The images are available to the public at [thelibrary.org/fromthedarkroom](http://thelibrary.org/fromthedarkroom). The move was possible with a \$10,000 grant funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities/American Library Association.
- A new meeting room reservation system, *rooms.thelibrary.org*, went into effect, simplifying the steps patrons can use to electronically request meeting reservations at the library branches.
- The weekly Planet Book Podcast was produced by Youth Services staff for ‘tween and teen listeners, giving insider scoops on books covering a variety of genres, and full interviews with national young adult authors.



- Children’s librarians Ashley and Sarah, with a staff videographer, produced a series of online spots called Beyond the Book for the Library’s Kids Page and YouTube. Each episode featured a short book talk and a brief discussion of other authors and illustrators, digital material and library programs that families could explore together.

110,368 cardholders  
989,665 total visits to The Library  
656,197 unique website visitors via WiFi devices  
1,185,642 virtual visits (website views)  
2,547,364 total circulation  
2,092,510 circulation of physical materials  
454,854 circulation of digital materials



OUR COMMITMENT: STRENGTHEN FISCAL RESOURCES

Financial stability is critical for maintaining the level of service our patrons have come to expect, and for providing the services they'll need in the future. To that end, Library officials and the Board of Trustees committed to three steps going into the future: Diversify our income stream, analyze The Library's fiscal ability to effectively serve all Greene County citizens, and increase the reserve funds towards the goal of 30% of the operating budget by 2025. In FY 21-22, Trustees directed \$150,000 to the budget's reserve fund. That fund is now at \$3,651,950.85.

The Library relied on the Greene County property tax to provide 84% of the \$15.8 million budget in FY21-22. It funds operations of the 10 library branches, a Mobile Library bookmobile and 24-hour outdoor library kiosks; a staff of 228 full- and part-time employees and vehicles.

We are grateful to taxpayers for that ongoing support, and we stretch those dollars by seeking generous gifts and grants to provide new technology — a 24-hour library kiosk, a Maker Space — that enhance discovery and outreach to all the 298,915 Greene County citizens we strive to serve.

Among our valued supporters:

- **The Friends of the Library** conducted fall 2021 and spring 2022 book sales that together totaled \$310,748.35 in gross sales. In that year, the Friends also committed \$173,202 toward the purchase of a second, 24-hour outdoor library kiosk slated for Springfield's east side not served by a library branch. This all-volunteer army also provided \$197,897 in grants for concerts, Summer Reading Program performers, a visit by author Brit Bennett, and books for young readers; and sponsored the appearance of humorist and author David Sedaris at the Historic Gillioz Theater.
- **The Library Foundation**, which works to raise private funds, distributed \$58,051.61 for projects including the Death & Dying series and alive session with Caitlyn Doughty, Heirloom Seed Library supplies, and archival support and shelving for the Local History & Genealogy Department.
- With federal grants distributed through the **Missouri State Library and Secretary of State's office**, the Library also received \$106,916.32 for needs such as desktop computers in the rural library branches and the Seeding a Healthy Life series promoting health and cultural literacy.



Humorist David Sedaris took to the Historic Gillioz Theatre stage Oct. 21, 2021, entertaining 788 fans with his signature essays. The Friends of the Library sponsorship made this a free event.

FINANCIAL

TOTAL REVENUE & OPERATING RESERVE	
CARRY-FORWARD:	\$15,725,796
Taxes	\$14,824,162
Overdue Fines and Fees	\$116,378
Grants/Contributions/State Aid	\$590,685
Service Fees	\$151,053
Miscellaneous Income and Interest	\$43,518
TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$15,725,796	
Salaries and Benefits	\$8,578,471
Library Materials	\$2,137,766
Other Operating Expenses	\$1,261,320
Facilities	\$660,298
Equipment and Capital Improvements	\$203,487
Debt Service	\$314,497
Professional Services and Misc. Expenses	\$1,432,837
Operating Reserve Carry-Forward	\$1,137,120