

# Beyond the Bookshelves

Alongside beloved reading programs, the Friends help the Library connect with the community through meaningful projects.

**Holiday gift baskets:** Each December, the Friends supply hundreds of high-quality, age-appropriate books for families served by the Portland Food Bank, ensuring every child receives a gift that inspires a love of reading.

**Book giveaways:** We purchase and distribute hundreds of books at town events, sparking curiosity and smiles long after the day ends.

**Staff appreciation:** Every June, the Friends host a thank-you lunch for the Library team and fund “staff picks,” allowing each staff member to add a personally meaningful book, DVD, audiobook, game, or musical instrument to the library’s collection.

**Design tools & seasonal murals:** We fund the cost of the Library’s design tools and, along with the Portland Library Board, share in the cost of the beautiful window murals that brighten the Library’s entrance.

**Portland Celebrates America 250:** Looking ahead to the nation’s semiquincentennial in 2026, the Friends will support the Portland Library’s participation in our town’s celebrations. Watch the Library’s monthly newsletters for details on programs, exhibits, and community events tied to this historic milestone.

## What else?

In addition to these highlights, Friends’ contributions fund Portland Library’s entire DVD collection, a large e-book and audiobook collection (where Portland residents get first access), and BookFlix early-literacy software, ensuring resources for every age and interest.

# Help Shape the Next Chapter

Love our Library and want to make a difference? Join the Friends of the Portland Library Executive Board! We are always looking for new members with fresh ideas and a bit of free time. You can reach us at [info@friendsofportlandlibraryct.org](mailto:info@friendsofportlandlibraryct.org).

Even if you cannot join our Board, your membership makes an enormous impact. Simply renew or become a member today using the enclosed form or the QR code. Together, we will continue to make our Library extraordinary: a place where curiosity thrives, families connect, and our community comes alive. Thank you for helping us write the Portland Library’s next great chapter!



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Portland, CT

Check out the Friends' website at

[www.friendsofportlandlibraryct.org](http://www.friendsofportlandlibraryct.org)

# Used Books, Anyone?

Year after year, the Friends’ Fall Book Sale is a community highlight and an important fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who browsed, bought, and volunteered in 2025, making this major undertaking possible and ensuring that every dollar raised goes straight back to the Library.

Can’t wait for the next big sale? The Friends keep the shelves stocked year-round at the *Second-Hand Prose* book shop, located in the hallway near the Mary Flood Room. Here you’ll find quality books at bargain prices (\$0.50 to \$2), including **mysteries, general fiction, non-fiction, romance, young adult and children’s books, puzzles, and DVDs**. New treasures also arrive each week, so there is always something fresh to discover.

Throughout the year, the Friends host pop-up events at *Second-Hand Prose*, such as:

**Holiday Book Store** — A month-long sale of gift-quality used books, starting December 1, featuring festive finds for adults and children.

**Books for the Beach** — A chance to stock up on paperbacks every June and July for perfect vacation reading.

## 2026 Book Collection Days

To keep our book supply strong, we hold donation days four times a year. Bring gently used books, DVDs, puzzles, and games to the Mary Flood Room on one (or more) of these Saturdays:

- January 10
- March 28
- June 13
- September 12

Please make sure all items are in “sellable” condition. (Sorry, no textbooks, business books, computer books, VHS tapes, or magazines.)

And remember: Every purchase and every donation directly supports Library favorites. Your book sale bargain truly comes full circle — turning stories you share at home into programs and resources for the whole town.



Supplement  
to the  
*Rivereast  
News  
Bulletin*



# FRIENDS OF THE PORTLAND LIBRARY

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# Your Library, Enriched: A Year of Friends-Funded Highlights

Portland Library is already a special place — welcoming, vibrant, and filled with resources for every stage of life. But what makes it extraordinary are the little things made possible by the Friends of the Portland Library (FPL). Thanks to your generosity, the Friends funded more than \$32,000 in programs, materials, and community connections in 2025, ensuring our Library continues to thrive as a true community hub.

## Fueling lifelong learning

From toddlers just discovering picture books to adults exploring new hobbies, the Friends made dozens of unique programs possible this year. Families crafted together, teens gathered for game nights, and the littles joined story time each week. Special events to play, read, learn, or investigate brought people of all ages together each season in unforgettable ways.

And of course, the annual Summer Reading Program inspired children, teens, and adults alike to log thousands of reading days and pages. As always, adult readers also read for a cause, turning their pages into music by funding Brownstone Intermediate School instrument rental scholarships for the new school year.

## Expanding access

Support from the Friends ensures Portland residents enjoy first pick of a growing e-book collection, an extensive DVD library, and exciting new additions like Tonieboxes and figurines — screen-free audio players and character toppers that let kids listen to stories and music with a simple tap — to spark young imaginations.

The Museum Pass Program — also funded by the Friends — continues to be one of our Library’s beloved offerings, providing free or discounted access to museums across the state and beyond. Three new passes were added this year: the American Clock & Watch Museum, the Mattatuck Museum, and the Connecticut Museum of Culture & History.

## Supporting families

It is never too early to fall in love with books. That is why the Friends provide every new Portland baby with a *Books for Babies* kit, filled with a high-quality board book, literacy tools, and baby’s first library card. The Friends also continue to hand out hundreds of books at town events, sponsor holiday gift baskets through the Portland Food Bank, and cover the costs of the Library’s early literacy software, program supplies, and prizes that make every library visit more memorable.

## Offering inspiration

From whimsical window murals that change with the seasons to artist receptions in the Mary Flood Room, the Friends help ensure the Library is also a place of beauty and creativity. Beyond being proud to sponsor receptions, refreshments, and staff appreciation initiatives, the Friends also give every librarian the chance to add a personally meaningful item to our Library’s collection.

And the fun continues even between programs and events. One library favorite is the bright yellow “Cube” — a padded nook with open sides that invites kids to climb in, lounge with a book, or share quiet conversations. Funded by the Friends last year, it has quickly become a beloved feature of the Children’s Area.

## Together, we enrich

Every program, event, and purchase is possible only because of our members’ unwavering support. Please renew or join today using the enclosed membership form or QR code. With your help, we will continue to provide the little things that make Portland Library extraordinary.

# 2025 in numbers

- \$32,000+ invested
- 100+ programs supported
- 3 museum passes added
- Hundreds of books distributed
- Countless more items purchased



# Adventures for Every Season

If you ever doubted that a library can be the most exciting place in town, 2025 proved otherwise. Thanks to the creativity of our librarians and the steadfast support of the Friends of the Portland Library, programs ran strong all year long — transforming ordinary days into unforgettable adventures for kids, teens, and adults alike.

## Arts and crafts for every age

The Library buzzed with imagination each month. Adults explored Irish calligraphy, painted ceramic rainboot planters, and sewed a life-sized portrait of a fin whale together. Families gathered to make winter bird mosaics, fairy and gnome houses, sock bunnies, salt-and-pepper shaker snowmen, and mod-podge garden pots with flower fairies. Kids went *Van Gogh with the Flow* to explore a variety of art techniques. Teens discovered new talents with acorn clay pots, Easter-themed gingerbread houses, marbled clay trinket dishes, and mandala rock art — each project an invitation to relax, laugh, and make something beautiful (or, at least, memorable) together.

## Playful learning and special events

Hands-on discovery went well beyond the craft table. Young readers cooked and crafted at *Adventures with Jack & Annie*, inspired by the Magic Tree House books. Kids and parents worked side by side at *School Supply Bingo*. Budding naturalists enjoyed *Buzzing About Bees*, complete with honey tasting, and met gentle critters of all sizes during the *Furry, Scaly Friends* animal encounter. Meanwhile, the youngest readers also enjoyed weekly *Storytime* adventures, with supplies for every activity covered by the Friends.

Teens had a blast at game nights and adults tried their hands (and arms) at arm knitting and cross-stitch. Outdoors, *Chalk the Walks* turned the sidewalks into a community gallery. And with *Voices of Portland*, the Friends also helped fund the printing and binding of stories that preserve our town's rich history.

## Why it matters

Behind every memorable moment was a commitment to community connection and lifelong learning. From crafts to storytelling, these programs invited neighbors to meet, create, and explore — proof that our Library is much more than books. All told, the Friends funded more than 100 programs throughout the year that collectively drew thousands of participants of every age, sparking curiosity, new skills, and friendships all year long.

*“Every time I come to the library, I find a new adventure,” said one young participant, eyes bright after a summer of games and quests. “It’s where my stories come alive.”*

*A parent smiled adding, “I love watching my child’s confidence grow with each program. The library has a way of building excitement and connections that reach far beyond the books.”*

# Passport to Discovery

Looking for a family day out that costs little or nothing? The Portland Library’s Museum Pass Program unlocks free or reduced admission to many cultural gems across Connecticut and beyond.

## New for 2025

This year, your library card can take you even farther with three new passes:

- **American Clock & Watch Museum** — Explore centuries of timekeeping history.
- **Mattatuck Mseum** — Immerse yourself in Connecticut’s art and cultural heritage.
- **Connecticut Museum of Culture & History** — Discover stories that shaped our state and its people.

Reserve a pass online, by phone, or at the Library and enjoy:

- **Free admission** to treasures such as the Eric Carle Museum, Connecticut River Museum, Connecticut’s Old State House, FloGris Museum (formerly Florence Griswold Museum), New Britain Museum of American Art, The Carousel Museum, and Wadsworth Atheneum
- **Reduced admission** to family favorites like Beardsley Zoo, Lutz Children’s Museum, The Mark Twain House & Museum, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, Mystic Seaport, and New England Air Museum

Most passes can be printed at home, making it easy to set off on a spontaneous visit. Whether sparking a child’s love of art or enjoying a weekend history trip, each outing is made possible by the Friends’ ongoing support.

*“The Museum Pass Program opened countless doors for us,” said one Portland resident. “It turned quiet weekends into adventures we’ll always remember.”*

# Thousands of Pages, Countless Memories

For the summer of 2025, Portland Library turned reading into a true community endeavor. From toddlers to seniors, 573 readers signed up to embrace the joy of books, and together, they read over 363,000 pages and 9,571 days.

## A season full of discovery

Children dove into stories and hands-on activities, from life-size games and scavenger hunts to craft projects and animal encounters that brought the joy of reading and learning to life. Young explorers went fossil hunting with *Dinosaurs Rock*, and got to meet bugs, frogs, snakes, tortoises, and an American alligator during *Reptiles Rock*. The *Stuffed Animal Sleepover* delighted little ones, who arrived the next day to find playful photos of their toys’ overnight escapades. Meanwhile children of all ages let their imaginations run wild in a life-size *Candyland* game.

Teens claimed the Library as their own with creative, high-energy activities. The after-hours *Library Lock-In* featured games and challenges long after closing time. The *Dungeons & Dragons* event built teamwork and storytelling skills. Culinary adventurers whipped up delicious dishes in *Spectacular Spuds*. And, the *Carnage at the Carnival* murder-mystery party thrilled all in attendance. Meanwhile, crafty adults got to practice the art of visible mending, as well as create sea glass and wire jewelry. Multi-generational drumming circles brought the whole community together in rhythm and laughter.

## Reading for a cause

Eager children and teens logged thousands of reading days, earning prizes and bragging rights along the way. At the same time, adult readers turned their pages into purpose. Thanks to more than 150 participants, the Friends were able to fund two instrument rental scholarships for Brownstone Intermediate School students, continuing a beloved tradition that helps young musicians reach their dreams.

The Friends of the Portland Library fund the full cost of the Summer Reading Program — covering all 62 programs, along with prizes and supplies. With the Library team’s dedication and the Friends’ behind-the-scenes support, the 2025 Program didn’t just fill pages, it inspired participants of all ages to keep reading long after summer ended.

# Starting Them Young

It is never too early to fall in love with reading. Through the *Books for Babies* program, every new Portland baby can receive a free welcome kit filled with everything needed to begin a lifelong journey with books. In recent years, the Friends have distributed more than 330 kits, each containing a high-quality board book, a baby’s first library card, and reading tips and resources — like a guide to the Portland Library’s *1,000 Books Before Kindergarten* program, and the *Babies Need Words Every Day* book list. Families can pick up a *Books for Babies* gift bag at Portland Library, the Town Clerk’s Office, or by contacting FPL Board Member Marilyn White at [atwmsw@sbcglobal.net](mailto:atwmsw@sbcglobal.net).

The Friends also cover the full cost of *BookFlix* — an online tool that pairs storybooks with nonfiction e-books to strengthen early literacy skills — as well as prizes for the *1,000 Books Before Kindergarten* program. Families can celebrate each milestone — and you can follow along — via cheerful photos of Portland's youngest readers on the Library’s social media.

# Where Local Art Takes Center Stage

Throughout 2025, the Mary Flood Room at Portland Library once again transformed into a welcoming gallery where art and community meet. Visitors discovered **JLS Gangwisch**’s explorations of how digital and physical media interact with the human form, celebrated **Youth Art Month** with vibrant works by students from Portland Secondary Schools, and enjoyed **Maria Fisher**’s whimsical animal paintings. Each show drew neighbors together to celebrate local talent and share conversation over the refreshments and homemade baked goods provided by the Friends, who sponsor every art reception.

Mark your calendar for one more in 2025: **Dan Castelli**’s black-and-white candid photographs capturing people’s reactions to art in museums is coming in December, with a reception on Saturday, Dec. 13, 1–3 p.m.

In 2026, you can look forward to **Nancy Brault** and **Sarah Weeden** exhibiting photographic works of Portland (Jan./Feb.), **Youth Art Month** presented by students of the Portland Secondary Schools (March/April), **Bob McDougall** displaying panoramic photo collages of Portland’s Main Street that he has created every 10 years since 1995 (May/June), as well as **John Bula**’s American flag collages (July/August), among others. Please check the Rivereast News Bulletin or the Library's newsletters for featured artists and reception dates and times.