

Another Great Summer Reading Program!

Portland Library's Summer Reading Program may have looked a bit different in 2020, but it still featured a full slate of programs and events that kept everyone motivated and connected all summer long.

This year's program centered around the theme *Imagine Your Story*. Preschoolers enjoyed story time sessions on dragons, magic and fairy tales, including *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Each week, children in grades K-2 did activities based on a different fairy tale and also received a clue to help them discover who poisoned a princess. Older kids in grades 3-5 explored the world of dragons, potions, Greek mythology, mythological creatures and alchemy through crafts, games, experiments and escape rooms.

All three of these programs were run online in order to ensure social distancing, and families could pick up supplies needed for the various activities in advance of each week's session. Both the story time and elementary programs were full to capacity each week, and Library staff received a great deal of positive feedback from families.

The teens enjoyed two "in person" programs--a scavenger hunt and a paint party. For the scavenger hunt, they wore specially constructed hats topped with pool noodles to make sure they kept a safe distance while completing puzzles and missions around town. And at the paint party, teens spread themselves out on the grass across from the Library while local artist Brigette Roy supplied materials and instruction needed to create a painting of a crashing wave.

But perhaps the most popular program of all was the Gnome on the Roam family treasure hunt. For six weeks this summer, Gnorbert the Library Gnome wandered to a different location around town, and families emailed the Library with that week's location for a chance to win a \$20 gift card to a local business. Gnorbert's hiding places included the Veterans' Memorial, Brownstone School, the Post Office, the Police Station, Portland Historical Society and the window of Savvy Swap Consignment. Twenty to thirty entries were received each week, and Library staff have received many requests to repeat this fun program.

The Adult Summer Reading Program once again hosted a drumming circle led by talented percussionist Mark Zarrillo. This year's event took place outside on the Waverly Green and was well-attended.

Of course, as always, the centerpiece of the Summer Reading Program was books, and plenty of reading was going on in Portland this summer. Children and teens in the Program (136 in total including 33 teens) logged a total of 947 days of reading for 15 minutes or more per day. Library staff distributed 228 scratch tickets at the outdoor Summer Reading table over ten weeks, each redeemable for a free book or outdoor toy or, for teens, an entry into a special end of summer raffle.

Adult readers, not to be outdone by the youngsters, did plenty of reading themselves. Twenty-four patrons participated in the Adult Summer Reading Program, reading a total of 107,000 pages. Four patrons read over 10,000 pages each! For the fourth straight year, our adult Summer Reading Program participants were "reading for a cause." For every 250 pages read by an adult, FPL donated money toward funding instrument rental scholarships for two deserving Brownstone Intermediate School students for the 2020-2021 school year. Brownstone Music Teacher Sharon Fuller wrote last year "Please make sure your summer adults realize how much your donation means to Brownstone students."

FPL is very pleased that, through the generous support of our many loyal members, we were once again able to pay the full cost of the Library's Summer Reading Program. Our funding covered the cost of all events, the Brownstone instrument scholarships, book prizes, gift card prizes, program supplies and refreshments. A big "Thank You" to our FPL members for making all this possible and to Jenn Renk, Patty Ballou and Beth Kauczka of Portland Library for planning and running these fun and creative programs!

Books for Holiday Baskets

As part of our commitment to encourage a love of reading in young people, FPL funds the purchase of books for holiday gift baskets given to families served by the Portland Food Bank. Each year, FPL provides hundreds of high-quality age appropriate books for infants, children and teens. We anticipate that the need will be greater than ever this year, but FPL is committed to fulfilling that need. In this small way, FPL is proud to support the efforts of Ruth Maio (Director of the Portland Food Bank) as she works tirelessly to make Portland a stronger community.

Check out FPL's website at
www.friendsofportlandlibraryct.org

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Fall 2020

Portland Library & FPL "Carry On" Through a Difficult Year

It's been quite the year. When the Friends of the Portland Library published our last newsletter, the Library was getting ready to celebrate its 125th anniversary and preparing for a significant renovation project. FPL had just completed another successful Fall Book Sale and was beginning its 2019 Membership Drive. Santa Norm and Mrs. Merry Claus (FPL's largest donors) were planning for another round of Christmas visits.

Little did any of us know that within months a pandemic would spread around the world causing tremendous suffering and unimaginable changes to our daily lives. Lockdowns, social distancing, masks and hand sanitizer would become part of our everyday routines. Around the world, people tried to "carry on" as best they could. And, in our tiny corner of the world, Portland Library and FPL did the same.

The Library closed on March 7th for its renovation project, but by mid-March all Connecticut libraries were closed due to Covid-19. Luckily, the renovation project (funded by a Connecticut State Library Construction Grant and a generous contribution from the Portland Library Endowment Fund) was able to proceed with accommodations to ensure worker safety. The results are quite impressive—an attractive and functional circulation desk along with new entry doors and ergonomically-designed furniture. Much of the carpeting and lighting has been replaced, and the Town Public Works crew added a new paint job.

The Library would remain closed until August 31st, but, during the closure, Library staff worked behind the scenes to provide services. Books, DVDs and audiobooks could be selected online and picked up "curbside." A reference librarian was available by phone and email to answer questions. The youth library services staff worked tirelessly to put together a creative and interactive summer program, which included themed virtual programs each week for preschoolers and elementary students, a socially-distanced paint party and scavenger hunt, a virtual bubble science program, and the wildly popular "Gnome on the Roam" weekly treasure hunt.

Meanwhile, FPL has continued to support the Library both during the shutdown and after its reopening. We fund the Library's DVD collection, as well as purchase e-books and audiobooks, at a total budgeted cost of \$8,000 in 2020. We also finance the full cost of the Library's impressive Museum Pass program at a budgeted cost of \$2,300 this year (see article on page 2). In addition, FPL funds the entire cost of the Library's Summer Reading Programs (see article on page 4), along with a wide variety of programs for children, teens and families held throughout the year. This year's offerings included a drumming circle, a program on reptiles and amphibians, a teen cooking program, several family craft nights, and virtual programs on rabbit rescue, homeschooling and the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote. FPL also pays for the program supplies and craft materials for the Library's Story Time program as well as provides refreshments, supplies and prizes for Library programs held throughout the year. All told, FPL budgeted \$11,000 for children, teen and adult programs in 2020.

Unfortunately, FPL faces some financial challenges going forward. For safety reasons, Santa Norm and Mrs. Merry Claus (otherwise known as Portland resident Norman Ward and Andover resident Dianne Grenier) will not be able to conduct their busy schedule of appearances during the upcoming Christmas season. Last year, FPL received more than \$3,600 from their generosity. In addition, FPL had to cancel its 2020 Fall Book Sale, and our Ongoing Book Sale was shut down for six months during the Library closure. Also, our Read & Recycle collections have been cancelled for the foreseeable future, so FPL will have fewer books to sell. We estimate the loss of revenue from books sales in 2020 to be approximately \$3,500 and expect that losses will continue at least through the early part of 2021.

All of the FPL-funded programs described above are possible only because of the generous support of our members. Now more than ever, we need your help to continue to fund these valuable programs. Please join FPL (or renew your membership) by sending in the enclosed membership form today. With your help, Portland Library and FPL will continue to "carry on" and, indeed, thrive in 2021 and beyond.

FPL Supports Programs for Portland's Youngest Readers

It's never too early for children to learn the joy of books! That's why The Friends support these four early literacy programs that help get Portland's youngest readers off to the best start possible.

Books for Babies: Each new Portland baby can receive a free "Books for Babies" kit. Each kit contains:

- o A Board Book
- o Welcome packet for Portland Library's 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program
- o Baby's First Library Card
- o *Books for Babies* brochure and bookmark with reading tips
- o *Babies Need Words Every Day* book list
- o *Babies Love Books: A Guide for Grown-ups* brochure

To receive a free "Books for Babies" kit, please contact

- o Jennifer Renk, Supervisor of Youth Services, Portland Library;
- o Town Clerk's Office, Portland Town Hall, 33 East Main Street; or
- o Marilyn White at atwmsw@sbcglobal.net.

Many thanks to FPL Executive Board Member Marilyn White, Portland Town Clerk Ryan Curley and the Library's Jennifer Renk for helping FPL distribute more than 134 kits to Portland families in the past three years!

1,000 Books Before Kindergarten is a national reading initiative that encourages parents and caregivers to read aloud daily to their children from birth to age 5.

Patrons can stop by the reference desk, write their child's first name on a green star for the Library's 1,000 Books rocket ship and take an introductory packet to get them started. As the child reaches "book milestones," the star changes color to track progress, and he or she earns prizes such as a bookmark and stamper, a journal and crayons, a tote bag and a free book. Graduates of the program receive a t-shirt and, with parental permission, have their photo taken for the Library's Facebook page. Currently 36 children actively participate in the program and 9 have graduated. Visit the Library today to get your child started on their voyage to early reading success!

BookFlix is an online literacy resource that pairs classic video storybooks with related nonfiction e-books to build a love of reading and learning. This software reinforces early reading skills and introduces children to a world of knowledge and exploration. BookFlix software can be accessed through the Library's website (portlandlibraryct.org).

Library Story Times: Miss Jenn and Miss Patty lead story time sessions for children from birth to 5 years old throughout the year. As this newsletter goes to print, both story time and a preschool science program are being held remotely, but we all hope to return to in-person sessions very soon. All of the Library's preschool programs help develop early literacy and social skills through stories, songs, games and activities. Please check the *Riverast News Bulletin* or the Library's website (portlandlibraryct.org) for the latest information on story time and other preschool programs.

FPL pays the full cost of Books for Babies kits, 1,000 Books program prizes and the BookFlix software. We also pay for craft and activity supplies for the Library's story time and other preschool programs. Thanks to our members for helping us help Portland's smallest readers!

Museum Pass Program

Looking for family entertainment that won't cost an arm and a leg? With Portland Library's Museum Pass Program, you can visit many local museums or attractions for free or at significantly reduced admission. Here is a list of available passes:

Free Admission

Connecticut River Museum
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
Florence Griswold Museum
KidCity: A Hands-on Children's Museum
New Britain Museum of American Art
New England Carousel Museum & Museum of Fire History
New Haven Museum
No Child Left Inside/State Parks & Forests Day Pass
Wadsworth Atheneum

Reduced Admission

Children's Museum (formerly Science Center of Connecticut)
Connecticut Science Center (discount coupons)
Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo
Imagine Nation Museum
Lutz Children's Museum
Maritime Aquarium and Imax Theater
The Mark Twain House and Museum
Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame
Mystic Aquarium
Mystic Seaport
New England Air Museum
Roaring Brook Nature Center

Due to the pandemic, please check the museum's website prior to your visit for the most current information on opening status, hours and special requirements. All passes are funded by the Friends of the Portland Library. Passes can be reserved at portlandlibraryct.org, by phone (342-6770) or by visiting Portland Library. Many passes can be printed at home from the Library's website.

Library Provides Access to Valuable Resources 24/7

Not quite ready to come back into the Library? Need information or entertainment after hours? Even when Portland Library is closed, you can access a world of resources from the Library's website with your Portland Library card. Here are some examples of the things you can do from home or from anywhere on your mobile device:

- Borrow movies, music, e-audiobooks, e-books, magazines, comics and TV shows to enjoy on your computer, tablet, phone or television through Hoopla or OverDrive;
- Access Book Flix, a high quality and fun early literacy program;
- Take any of 500 online Continuing Education Courses;
- Access Job Assistance Resources at Job Now--practice interviews, receive resume and cover letter tips and much more;
- Study more than 100 Languages;
- Take Connecticut DMV practice tests;
- Access ResearchIT, a database of e-books, news & scholarly journals;
- Read 60 online popular magazines;
- Find Consumer Reports Ratings for products;
- Access Reference USA, a database of business and consumer information;
- Register for Library programs;
- Reserve Library materials;
- Read the Library's latest newsletter; and
- Print a Museum Pass!

Visit portlandlibraryct.org for all this and much more. To keep up with all the latest news and events from Portland Library, sign up for the monthly online newsletter on the Library's website by filling out the "Contact Us!" form. You can also follow the Library on Facebook and Pinterest by clicking on the logos at the bottom of the home page.

Join Us!

Want to help support Portland Library? Join FPL's Executive Board! We are looking for new members with fresh ideas and a bit of free time. The Board meets once a month (via Zoom since March 2020!) and runs FPL's books sales, Read & Recycle Book Collections and Artist Receptions. Although some of these activities have had to be curtailed due to Covid-19, we hope to reinstate them as soon as it is safe to do so. We also decide how money raised through our Membership Drive and book sales is allocated. Contact Maureen Muir at 203-980-4087 or MLTSherman@gmail.com for more information. Help us support Portland Library!

FPL Book Sales - All Year Long!

Want to stock up on some great reading material? You can buy quality books at bargain prices every day in the Friends' Second Hand Prose Book Sale area of the Library. We have mysteries, general fiction, nonfiction, romance, young adult and children's used books and sometimes used DVDs. Many items are like new and would make great gifts. Hardcover books sell for \$2.00 and trade paperbacks cost \$1.00. DVDs, mass market paperbacks, books for children and young adults, and discarded books from the Library's collection all sell for only \$0.50 each. New treasures arrive each week!

FPL also holds several targeted book sales in the Book Sale area throughout the year. The **Holiday Book Store**, our month-long sale of gift quality used books including adult and children's holiday books, begins this year on **Monday, November 30**. During **June and July**, patrons can stock up on paperback books for their vacation reading at the annual **Books for the Beach** sale. At various times throughout the year, we often have a large inventory of discarded Library books that we sell at discounted prices.

Unfortunately, the 2020 Friends' **Fall Book Sale** had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. The Fall Book Sale not only represents FPL's signature event of the year but also a significant source of income for our programs. We look forward to bringing back the Fall Book Sale in 2021 and once again seeing the Mary Flood Room and the Wagner Room filled with members and area residents who come out to find great book bargains while supporting FPL and the Library.

All proceeds from FPL book sales benefit programs funded by the Friends, including DVD, e-book and audiobook purchases, the Museum Pass Program, the Books for Babies Program, Artist Reception Program, and the purchase of software for the Library.

We Love Our Library Staff!

Portland Library is blessed with a top-notch staff. Every staff member is friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. In past years, in recognition of our Library employees' hard work, FPL has funded a luncheon in June for all Library staff and provided homemade baked goods every day for a week. Unfortunately, because of Covid-19, this part of the celebration had to be cancelled this year, but we look forward to bringing back the luncheon and goodies in 2021. Luckily, we were able to continue our tradition of asking each staff member to select a book, audiobook or DVD that has meaning to her, and having FPL fund the purchase of that item for the Library's collection. In this way, FPL can celebrate our wonderful staff and add to the Library's collection all at the same time!



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