

A Wild Time for All at the Summer Reading Program

If you visited or drove by the Portland Library this past summer or fall, you couldn't help but notice the wonderful jungle scene that adorned the windows of the Library. The mural, painted by talented local artist Ola Rucz, included a lion, a giraffe, a zebra, a flamingo, an elephant, a leopard and tropical foliage. The beautiful paintings provided the perfect introduction to this year's theme for the Summer Reading Program—*Tails and Tales*.

Preschoolers enjoyed story time sessions on the Town Green complete with animal-themed stories, songs and take-home craft projects. Children in grades K-2 helped Safari Sam solve a jungle mystery by conducting experiments and completing craft projects. Older kids in grades 3-5 learned about the jungle's ecosystem. They made quicksand, dissected sterilized owl pellets and learned about animal adaptations through hands-on activities. The weekly programs for the two older age groups 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.

There also was plenty of "in person" entertainment throughout the summer. Children enjoyed a visit from Country Quilt Llama Farm and a *Dancin' with Hoops* program that got everyone moving. The teens had four outdoor programs of their own—*Tik-Tok Glass Painting*, *Tie-Dye Party!*, *Outdoor Escape Room* and *Marshmallow Animal S'mores*. The Ben Anna Band, a high-energy musical duo, entertained attendees of all ages.

The Adult Summer Reading Program hosted three multigenerational drumming circles on the Waverly Green led by talented percussionist Mark Zarrillo. Other events for the adults included a paint party in the Mary Flood Room and two online Connecticut Audubon programs on owls and raptors.

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 (314 active participants) logged a total of 186,060 minutes or more than 129 days of reading! Prizes included books, Beanie Boos (and related accessories) and tickets for special end of summer raffles.

Adult readers, not to be outdone by the youngsters, did plenty of reading themselves. Forty-five patrons participated in the Adult Summer Reading Program, reading a total of 164,871 pages. Twenty-two patrons logged more than 2,000 pages while five participants read more than 10,000 pages! For the fifth 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 2021-2022 school year.

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, the jungle window mural, and all prizes, program supplies and refreshments. A big "Thank You" to our FPL members for making all this possible. Thank you also to Jenn Renk, Patty Ballou and Beth Kauczka of Portland Library for planning and running these fun and creative programs and to the twenty-one teen volunteers who assisted them!

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. 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.



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FPL Supports Library Through Another Challenging Year

Through all the ups and downs of the past year, Portland Library staff members have been creative and flexible in their efforts to provide the best possible services to Portland residents. And throughout it all, the Friends have been by their side, ready, willing and able to support the Library in any way that we can.

When FPL published our previous newsletter in November 2020, the Library was in the middle of a busy season of virtual fall programming. We had all settled into a "new normal" for our in-person Library visits complete with social distancing, book quarantining, hand sanitizer and masks.

In the following weeks, there would be a resurgence of Covid cases that would necessitate the closing of the building to the public on December 18. As with the earlier closing during the spring and summer of 2020, Library staff mobilized behind the scenes: books, DVDs and audiobooks could be selected online and picked up "curbside," delivery was available for homebound patrons, and Reference staff and Youth Services staff provided support through phone and email.

While the building was closed to the public, the Library also continued to offer a variety of virtual programs for all ages. For adults, the Mystery Lovers Book Club met monthly and Master Gardener (and former FPL Board Member) Lynn Keller, gave a talk on rain gardens. The Youth Services Staff ran a Winter Reading Club entitled *Paws for a Cause* in which cans of pet food were donated to the Portland Food Bank upon completion of reading goals. Online Story Times, Preschool Science programs and Family Craft Nights continued unabated. For slightly older children, there was an inauguration party for President Pigeon and Nature Crafting programs. Teens learned how to make Stress Relief Kits and delicious Hot Chocolate Bombs.

On March 10, the Library reopened to the public for brief visits to borrow books and use computers. By late April, the Library was open more fully and, through careful management, has been able to remain open even during the surge of the Delta variant. The Library continues to offer "curbside" and home delivery services for those who require them.

When the Library did reopen, it was better than ever thanks to a \$28,000 grant from the State of Connecticut to support "safe service delivery." The grant paid for a wireless internet upgrade for the entire library (and even the parking lot), wireless laptop computers and iPad Mini Tablets to allow for greater social distancing, a touchless bottle filler and touchless hand sanitizing stations, an indoor book return, and air cleaners to be used in small areas such as study rooms.

Meanwhile, FPL has continued to support the Library both while the building was closed to the public and after its reopening. We fund the Library's DVD collection, as well as purchase many e-books and audiobooks, at a total budgeted cost of \$8,000 in 2021. We also finance the full cost of the Library's impressive Museum Pass program at a budgeted cost of \$2,000 this year (see article on page 3). 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 three drumming circles, programs on Connecticut wineries, Connecticut Women Changing Democracy and the Connecticut River watershed, many family craft nights, nature programs on llamas, owls and raptors, along with programs on paper quilling, glass painting, hula hooping and cartooning. FPL also pays for the program supplies and craft materials for the Library's Story Time programs 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 2021.

All of the FPL-funded programs described above are possible only because of the unwavering 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 will continue to serve as a vital resource for learning and entertainment in our community through whatever "ups and downs" may lie ahead.

Book Bargains - 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 books, and often DVDs, CDs and puzzles. Many items are like new and would make great gifts. Hardcover books sell for \$2.00 and trade paperbacks cost \$1.00. DVDs, CDs, mass market paperbacks, children's books, 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, December 6**. 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 2021 Friends' **Fall Book Sale** had to be cancelled based on Covid-19 safety guidelines provided to the Library by the Chatham Health District. We look forward to bringing back the Fall Book Sale in 2022 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.

Celebrating Our Library Staff

Portland Library is blessed with a top-notch staff. Every staff member is friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. In recognition of our Library employees' hard work, FPL funds a luncheon each June for all Library staff and provides homemade baked goods every day for a week. In addition, and more importantly, each staff member selects a book, audiobook or DVD that has meaning to her, and FPL pays to add that item to 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!

Read & Recycle is Back!

For many years, FPL has held quarterly "Read & Recycle" collections of gently used books, DVDs, CDs and puzzles. The sale of these items raises money for various Library programs including the Summer Reading Programs and the purchase of children's books for the Portland Food Bank Holiday Basket Program. Unfortunately, we missed six consecutive book collections in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, and our supply of sale items was running very low.

Our return to collections in May 2021 was a limited one (just DVDs and puzzles), since the Mary Flood Room was not available for book sorting. But by September, we were thrilled to be able to hold our first full Read & Recycle collection in almost two years. Business was brisk from the start as Portland residents dropped off boxfuls of donations. Our crew of FPL Board Members efficiently sorted and boxed the items during the collection and for many hours thereafter. Thank you to everyone who so generously donated and to our Board Members for all their hard work!

We look forward to holding a full schedule of Read & Recycle collections in 2022 on the following dates:

- Saturday, January 15
- Saturday, March 26
- Saturday, June 25
- Saturday, September 24

The collections will be held from 10 to Noon in the Library's Mary Flood Room. We especially need newer hardcover books and paperbacks, children's books (all ages), DVDs and puzzles.

All donated items must be in "sellable" condition. We cannot accept items that are dirty, moldy or in poor condition. No textbooks, business books, computer books, self-help books, VHS videos, cassette tapes or magazines, please. Thank you so much for your support!

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 and runs FPL's book sales, Read & Recycle Book Collections and Artist Receptions. Although some of these activities have had to be curtailed due to Covid-19, we look forward to reinstating 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!

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
Connecticut's Old State House
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
Florence Griswold Museum
The Mattatuck Museum +
New Britain Museum of American Art
New England Carousel Museum &
Museum of Fire History
Wadsworth Atheneum

Reduced Admission

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

+ New Pass! The Mattatuck Museum specializes in American art and cultural history with a strong focus on Connecticut artists and history. After nearly two years and \$9M, the Museum is now welcoming visitors into their beautiful new building, which features a new addition and renovated interiors, updated amenities and ample free parking.

Due to the pandemic, please check the museum or attraction'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.

Helping Portland's Youngest Readers

It's never too early for children to learn the joy of books! That's why FPL supports several early literacy programs that help get Portland's youngest readers off to the best start possible. These programs include

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

- **BookFlix** - an online literacy resource that pairs classic video storybooks with related nonfiction e-books to build a love of reading and learning; and

- **Library Story Times** - Miss Jenn and Miss Patty lead story time sessions and other preschool programs throughout the year. These programs help develop early literacy and social skills through stories, songs, games and activities.

In addition to these programs, for many years, the Friends have offered a free **"Books for Babies"** kit to every new Portland baby. 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 - exchange it at the Library for the real thing
- o *Books for Babies* brochure and bookmark with reading tips
- o *Babies Need Words Every Day* booklist
- 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.

In addition, we've implemented two new ways to reach out to Portland families who might not be aware of this program. Middlesex Health, Portland Family Medicine has kindly offered to distribute kits to Portland families with new babies when they come in for their first wellness visit. Secondly, the Town Clerk's office will send out a postcard (prepared and paid for by FPL) to every family that receives a Portland birth certificate informing them that a free kit is available at the Library.

Many thanks to FPL Executive Board Member Marilyn White, the Town Clerk's Office, and the Library's Jennifer Renk for helping FPL distribute more than 172 kits to Portland families in the past four years. And a special thank you to Middlesex Health, Portland Family Medicine and the Town Clerk's Office for helping us give out even more kits in 2022!

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 youngest readers!