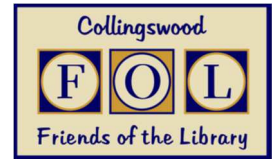


Friends Focus



The Newsletter of Collingswood Friends of the Library

Fall 2020

Director's Message: PIVOT!

If there is a word for 2020, it ought to be “pivot”. How many times this year have we been asked to reimagine and reframe our ideas, our plans, our actions, beliefs, and values – to reshape ourselves around each new change and challenge in this thing we call a reality?

It was a tough blow when we got word this March that we needed to close our building to the public. “What does a library look like without patrons?” we wondered. Could a library go from a mostly physical space to mostly virtual presence?

We already had digital offerings: eBooks and downloadable audiobooks for all ages and interests, databases, email reference services, social media channels, and a functional website. We had a YouTube Channel that we hadn't had much time to populate with content, but we had the tools, the staff, and the enthusiasm to take our programs online. Within days of closing, we were shooting storytime videos and learning how to best market them to our community through our website and social media channels. Staff then created subtitles for each of these videos to increase accessibility. We found new ways to reach out to the community with messages from the library: we taught folks how to manage their library accounts online, how to find and checkout eBooks, and how to get a digital library card from home – or wherever they were. For our users who were missing staff recommendations, we created a book concierge service to create customized book recommendations, focusing primarily on eBooks that were available at the time. To support career and personal development during the quarantine, we added LinkedIn Learning (Lynda.com) as a valuable educational tool for the entire community.

It was hard, coming into an empty library on those cold, dark, and often rainy spring days. We would wave when folks walked by, though they were few and far between, and we would feel this loss of the bond with the community that we always took for granted. When your livelihood and your purpose are inextricably linked with providing service to others -- typically in person -- it is hard to pivot your heart as well as your mind.

We reached out to our schools and asked how we could help. We created a virtual building tour for classes who had to cancel plans to visit during the school year. We learned more about Zoom, Facebook Live, and other platforms that would allow us to connect with our community in a digital world. For adults, our Book Club moved online; Professor Keith Forrest offered fun, interactive, and educational programs about the Spanish Flu and Frances Perkins, and we hosted a

film viewing and discussion with the makers of the “Rigged”, a documentary about voter suppression. Talk about timely events! For teens, we built an interactive digital “home” on [Discord](#). The popular D&D Program moved to this site, as did other existing teen events, including new additions such as Jack in the Box Gaming and a Quaranzine Group.

Still, these were hard times for everyone – at home, at the library, and elsewhere. The Reference team researched, expanded, and shared our [existing lists](#) of mental health and social service resources, food resources, financial help, and whatever else we found that our community needed.

As Spring slowly rolled into Summer, we began preparations to say goodbye to a library institution – the Unstoppable Miss Dot, guru of Youth Services. Miss Dot greeted the challenges of digital programming head-on, reinventing herself as a veritable YouTube Star. Her nuanced book readings, storytelling, crafting, and play-acting comforted, entertained, and touched hearts (young and not-so-young) throughout our community. She was [and is] a tough act to follow.

The Youth Services Team put together a Summer Reading Program that had both online and paper-based options, per the input we received from the community survey that we conducted in the late spring. On our website and social media pages we offered craft and STEM videos and showcased events from Sciencetellers and the American Swedish Historical Museum. We also hosted interactive, real-time Lego Club on Zoom and teen programs on Discord.

As the events of May and June included the tragic killing of George Floyd, and the ensuing reactions of communities across America (and the world), we highlighted our [library collections](#) featuring titles about racism, the role of race in criminal justice, and we redoubled our efforts to highlight staff book recommendations from black authors and other marginalized voices, including Latinx, Indigenous, and LGBTQ authors. We also used this time to form an interdepartmental Equity Team to help us focus and maintain our efforts in the future. This work has continued into the fall with the launch of our [Anti-Racism Resources Page](#).

We reopened the library in June for contactless pickup and expanded services in July to allow patron visits by appointment three days per week. We finally saw some familiar faces – and we met some new ones as well! We expanded our appointment days and times this fall, but we are still operating in a world that is far from “normal.” The library, like all places, is changed. For now, we wear our masks and keep a safe distance – for others, as much as for ourselves. Our online adult and [youth programs](#) continue, and we have added new offerings, including an [adorable] interactive Bitmoji Classroom Feature that kids will love! We’ve created and updated web pages focusing on the [2020 Census](#), [Healthcare](#), and [Voter Information](#) to help the public stay updated and engaged. And of course, we are doing our usual patron assistance in-person, by phone, and online. We will continue to ask for (and listen to) your suggestions for navigating this changing landscape. Most importantly, we continue to appreciate your support. We are lucky to be part of this uniquely wonderful community, and we are glad to be back!

Carissa

President's Message:

I am not quite sure where the time has gone but fall is here! I am so happy that the Library is open for scheduled appointments & book pick-ups. I found the programming they provided digitally during quarantine to be uplifting and kept me engaged during quarantine. You may have noticed we did not send a spring newsletter with a membership renewal out this year. We are not requesting annual dues this year; financial situations are different for many this year and asking just didn't feel right. For those who renewed in 2019, we will give you an automatic renewal for 2020. But don't let this stop you from making a donation during this upcoming holiday season if you are able. I would like to congratulate Sena Amuzu, Eva VanLaar and Quynh Pham as each was a recipient of the 2020 Friends of the Library scholarship. We wish you the best of luck in your studies during these unusual times. Be well!

Anita

Visiting the Library:

Access to the library building is currently by appointment; please call us (856-858-0649) if you would like to visit! We are offering appointments to browse the book collections and to use the computers and reference services. Curbside service is also offered Monday-Saturday. We will continue to adapt library days and hours in conjunction with state and local guidelines. To view our current hours of operation, please visit our website at www.collingswoodlib.org or call the library. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to see our latest news!



After over 26 years of library service, Miss Dot said good bye in June. Friends worked with Miss Dot for many years and on many activities including Summer Reading and the incredibly successful Comic Book Day! We know you all join us in wishing her a happy, healthy retirement.

**This newsletter is published by
Collingswood Friends of the Library**

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Friends meet via Zoom on the Second Monday
of the month at 5:30 pm.

If you are interested in attending via Zoom,
please email cschanely@collingswoodlib.org.



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