

Library News | Summer 2020

From the Friends of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library



From the Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

With the library's doors closed since the Ides of March, people may be wondering, what is the library staff up to with no patrons, no programs, no passports—not much output at all? Aside from washing our hands, wearing masks, and keeping six feet apart, that is. Join me if you will on a tour of how we're keeping busy and building for a better library and community when we reopen soon.

First, I should mention that about 50% of the library's staff have actually been at home. In compliance with the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act, Montgomery

and Floyd Counties are providing Emergency Leave to persons who are at high risk in the COVID-19 emergency, who are caregivers for persons at high risk, and also to the parents who have found themselves needing to stay home with their kids while schools are closed. These staff people are keeping in touch but not working every day. [continued on page 2]

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Public services staff in each branch have been providing telephone and email assistance Monday-Friday. Questions range from helping people with the eBook and eAudio resources, helping get people new library cards (mostly for using eBooks for now), to helping people find where to go to file for unemployment or check out official information on the virus from the Virginia Department of Health. When Governor Northam issued his Stay-at-Home order and we closed the book drops—it took a worry off the branch staff with handling returns; now we have good guidance from the Centers for Disease Control on quarantining material.

Also on the list in the branches was major effort in late April and early May to ship out all the available holds that were sitting on the shelf waiting for their next reader. This not only got the books and DVD's into people's hands, it also will make the eventual reopening days much less crowded—we don't want to be the next O'Hare Airport or South Beach on the news! Staff contacted people awaiting holds, and if the borrower still wanted the book, bagged it, addressed it, and sent it up to the regional office where it was metered and mailed. There has also been great work done on the collections. Blacksburg flipped the locations of the teen books and the adult large print. Now large print is close to the rest of the adult fiction, and the teens at Blacksburg have a new seating area. I hope they can come and sit there soon! Blacksburg and Christiansburg both refined their Easy book shelving so their smallest users can easily find stories on the subjects they like. And all branches have done excellent work analyzing content and circulation patterns to pull material that is out-of-date, inaccurate, and no longer in demand.

The Collections team—me; Youth Services Manager Sarah Pahl; the four branch managers; and the acquisitions and technical services team—have not stopped ordering new material. We are hoping that people can come in and see all the new material soon. In the meanwhile we have been ordering new material in eBook and eAudio format. Thanks to support from the MFRL Foundation, we have been able to order hundreds of new titles, including all the new bestsellers for adults, teens and children.

Blacksburg is home to MFRL's Information Technology team, and from their perch on the mezzanine, they have done awesome work making the library's automation system work with the demands of unexpected closure

and uncertain timeframes for opening. Aside from communicating important information through the web page, they implemented online card registration, turned up the strength of wireless in our parking lots, and installed new equipment and software.

The Youth Services team has held online events for teens and children—branch staff has done wonderful stories for children online also. Youth Services has also reimaged our 2020 Summer Reading event for a “no crowds” paradigm. We will use a new online platform that will not only give children an opportunity to log their reading, but offer online badges, unlockable games, and more. The new ReadSquared platform will be available for summer reading fun for adults too starting in June.

There's also been plenty going on here in the regional office. Between sourcing PPE, sneezeguards and disinfectants, revisiting budgets and appropriations, and working with the counties to understand and implement leave and personnel policies, we haven't slowed down.

Before coming to MFRL, I had a reputation for being someone who never wanted to close the doors—sitting in the branch answering phones with the power off, showing people to books with a flashlight, opening one end of the building while ServPro was in the other end with their giant floodwater vacuum. But COVID-19 is different. For the public health, we have been closed since March, but this is a passage none of the staff would have chosen. We have tried to make good use of the days passed with the doors closed and the masks on. Hopefully, it will be time well-spent, and will benefit library patrons in the years to come. We look forward to the Governor's relaxing of public health restrictions, so that we can safely get back to helping you, and all the library patrons.

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By Karim Khan (Library Director)

General News Cont'd

UPDATE | With Virginia moving to the Governor's Phase 1 Safer-at-Home Order, we are excited to have started Curbside Pickup as of May 18. Patrons may pick up their available holds requests in a safe, contactless process, whether they drive up, bike up, or walk up. The library is also offering a new "Library Picks for You" service. Call your library branch and let the staff know the kinds of material you want. Staff will then prepare a

selection of materials for pickup based on your request. Also as part of curbside pickup, we have our new remote printing service through Princh. Princh lets anyone print to their library branch printer from a mobile device or home computer. Library staff will bring the prints out to the curb. It's great to be getting material (and prints) into people's hands again!

By Karim Khan (Library Director)

Not Dressed Up, But Plenty To Do! | Here at the library folks are wearing more casual clothes and not leaving the building for meetings, but we have plenty of things we can do while the library is closed. I do outreach programs for the library so while I cannot visit assisted living facilities or make the rounds to craft with the ladies at RSVP I can do a lot of planning. I am using my time to get ahead on planning programs for later in the Summer and next year. Designing a Christmas card or two for the library's use is one thing I've gotten the jump on as well as attending webinars/training online for future use. The staff has also stepped up and helped with the limited delivery we've done driving materials to other library branches.

Our Summer Reading Program is getting nearer, and I'm working on Summer Reading plans and gathering

prizes for the adult program. This year's theme is Imagine Your Story—I'm sure we all have a story to tell about our time in quarantine. If you like to write, please write a short description or an anecdote of how you and your family have spent your time at home and leave it at the circulation desk (when we open) or email it to me at lspivey@mfrl.org. We could make a note book or post our stories on Facebook.

Also if you are a writer, I'm always looking for folks to review books for our monthly contribution to the Roanoke Times. Please email me at the address above or call at 540-382-6969 extension 221 if you are interested and I will send you more information.

By Linda Spivey (Outreach and PR Coordinator)

GARDEN TOUR UPDATE | The NRV Garden Tour Committee hopes there will be a way forward this Summer to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our tour. The garden owners have been hard at work planning, prepping, and implementing new garden structures as well as new species of flora and fauna. We want to honor their hard work and commitment if possible, based on the yet unknown circumstances that July 11 will bring in the ongoing pandemic.

We are committed not to jeopardize the well-being of any of the gardeners, our Friends of the Library volunteers, or our guests. We also acknowledge the impact of our decision on FOL funding. We will continue to approach the situation cautiously as we move forward. We appreciate your patience, and we wish you good health. For updates, check the Friends of the Library website

<http://www.mfrlfriends.org/wp/garden-tour/> or the Friends' Facebook page.

By Lynn Brammer (Garden Tour)



General News Cont'd

DONATIONS | With loads of extra time these days, many of you have begun some form of Spring cleaning around the house. The Friends of the Library ask that, *if possible*, you please hold onto your book donations till your local branch can reopen and receive them for our book sales. These donations and the money they generate are a key part of our contribution to the overall library system and its programs. Thank you!

By Ken Vaughan (Newsletter Editor)



Thank You

Sponsorships | Friends of the Library are deeply appreciative of the following businesses and individuals for their significant support of library programs and events in 2020. Each has contributed \$200 or more as named sponsors of the Summer Reading Program or the Garden Tour.



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