

Today Is Tomorrow’s Yesterday

By Cyndi Burne, Assistant Director/Teen Services

Dear Teens,

Ok, this is hard! I have tried to write this article a half dozen times and deleted every draft. I tried different approaches to summarize this last year, but nothing seems to flow, the words are stilted and fail to express what I want to say. I am sure there is a metaphor in there somewhere for what we are going through now. This pandemic has made everything more difficult, even the easy stuff, like stopping by the library. I can only imagine how hard it is as a teenager, not being allowed to see your friends, go to a game, or just hang out.

There are so many things beyond your control right now that I am sure you feel overwhelmed. Please try to remember that things will get better. Think about the fact that you are living through a period in time that will be referenced in future history books. You are living history! The stories you will tell!

Despite the challenges we face today, time is moving along and we are all finding ways to adapt to each “next new normal”. What better time to escape into a good book?

I have tried to think of ways to make your experience at the library as easy and stress free as possible.

Be prepared though. The chairs are

stacked and the table is pushed to the side to make room for safe browsing. There is a display of teen titles with bookmarks identifying them as a mystery, fantasy, realistic fiction, etc. You will find a binder under the whiteboard that lists all of the newer teen titles by subject and next to the binder is a basket full of Fun on the Fly craft kits to take home and make. If you can suggest anything else the library can do for teens, please let me know!

I have to admit I miss seeing you all; discussing books, listening to your suggestions, hearing about your daily life. I miss your energy. The library is too quiet. (Yes, truly!) I can’t wait for the day we can discuss life during a pandemic in the past tense. It might seem far off right now, but it is getting closer every day. Until that time remember to be kind to yourself and others and try to always look on the bright side of life.

Cyndi



The teen reading group knows that pizza is the perfect pairing for good books.



Galaxy Art is a favorite of kids and teens.

Topsham Public Library has provided 20
Teen programs and 96 Children’s programs
between June 2019—Feb. 2020

Children’s Services: Adapting Together

By Mariah Sewall, Children’s Librarian

In the last year, the children’s department has been so busy! We had been doing game nights and movies, exciting large-scale programs like the Maine 3-Railers Model Railroad display, a visit from Chewonki, or reading with Santa, as well as smaller events like our book discussion groups. We had three weekly storytimes that were thriving, always full of smiling, singing, dancing families. There was rarely a dull or quiet moment! And then came March, and everything changed in the span of one week. Since then, I have certainly had to rethink my methods to remain true to our mission!

Using Zoom, I virtually visited several classes before the end of the school year and did read-alouds and question and answer sessions. I revamped our summer reading program so that it was easy to pick up and earn a goody bag of treats, as well as track online. I recorded video storytimes so families could do storytime with me from their homes. We partnered with Create It Labs and Cathance River Education Alliance to offer weekly take-home kits to explore science and nature



The Maine 3-Railers Model Railroad Display.

activities. I also looked for any way that I could connect - personalized videos with a favorite song, letters in the mail, opening up my “Hello Window” so families that didn’t want to come inside could say Hi - anything I could think of that would make social distancing a little less difficult!

As we look to the future, I admit, I’m looking forward to the days when everything seems normal again. I also know that our “new normal” is likely to change, possibly daily, and that the library must be ready to remain steady even through all of the change. I’m envisioning interactive Zoom storytimes and prerecorded storytimes for those that can’t make it online at a certain time. I’ll assemble themed book bundles, take-home creative activities, personalized booklists, specialized help with research and school projects, and more. It turns out there’s so much we can share even during these uncertain times!



Mariah created a Storywalk for children of all ages.

That brings me to our present moment, in this community that I love. What do you want from the children’s department at this moment? What do you need? The thing I hear most often is “I don’t want to bother you.” Friends, it is NEVER a bother! I want to know how the library can help you and your family, whether the goal is entertainment or education or a little bit of both! I want to know what you need, or if you’re not sure, I want to know the challenge and see if we can come up with a solution together! Most of all, I want to be there in the way that the library was always there for me as a child. So, let me hear from you! mariah@topshamlibrary.org is my email, call 207-725-1727 if you want to chat on the phone, or stop in and have a (masked, socially distant) visit with me!



Reading together at the library is a special time that will come again.

Our Year in Pictures



Joy of Art is much anticipated every year.



We are here to serve you.



Lindsay and her Puppet Pals is always well attended and the children and their families have a great time.



This fellow is enjoying The Joy of Art.



Accepting food in place of fines helped support our local food bank.



Maine Crime Writers, Kate Flora, Maureen Milliken, and Barbara Ross created a mystery, and we helped.



Merrymeeting Gleaners use the library to distribute free fresh produce.

Development

By Susan Lowe, Development Committee

There is no other institution like a public library, its sense of community; its sense of home, a welcoming place for all ages. Librarians (curators, monks, scribes, archivists, as we have been named throughout history) have always dealt with societal change. This pandemic is no exception.

The Topsham Public Library, along with other libraries in Maine, has adopted the Maine Library Commission’s “Public Library Checklist” for safe reopening and

operations. These are very specific guidelines which prioritize our community’s health and safety.

Our users tell us they have a great sense of relief that the library has reopened. Things are not the same, but what is? Vital services remain, but the methods have changed. More remote reference, a larger collection of eBooks, modifications of the layout of the library, more communication using email and social media, virtual programming, sanitation requirements of the facility, quarantining returned material, and curbside delivery are among many of

the changes that have been put in place for the health and safety of our staff as well as the community.

Many of these modifications require unanticipated expenses and are more labor intensive for staff. Property taxes provide about 85% of the budget for which we are most grateful to the citizens of Topsham. Donations from our community of users and businesses make up the rest of the budget. Thank you for your past support and consideration of a donation to the Library. It is not how much you give, but that you give.

Contributions to the Topsham Public Library are tax deductible.

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