

# Teen Services: Metaphorically Speaking

By Cyndi Burne, Assistant Director/Teen Services

I am having trouble with this year’s theme of *“Thriving in Difficult Times”*. I agree that we are definitely living in difficult times, but I am not sure about the thriving part. When I think of thriving, I think of examples like the plants in my garden. I prepare the soil, plant the seedlings, nurture them until they are established, and then enjoy their bounty. This past year has felt more like we have held our heads above water by paddling continuously, and now we occasionally get to float on our backs for a few minutes and catch our breaths before the next wave hits. Maybe striving for solid ground...

I know the library has been successful in our continuation of adapting safe ways to provide services over the past year. We opened our doors when you needed us, we sanitized, curb-sided, and tented. The grab & go kits in the teen room are disappearing faster than I can restock, new books are coming and going rapidly, and I am even starting to see a few teen faces.

We are definitely moving in the right direction, but I want more! I miss the casualness of a group of teens, the jolt of experiencing their energy and watching the interactions among a group of friends, their happiness generated by simply being together. I want to sit in a tween or teen book discussion group and experience a

book through their eyes (I also miss the marvel of watching the pizza, chips, and cookies disappear in seconds!) I want the library to be loud again!

While the passive teen programs have been very successful, and definitely needed during the height of the pandemic, I look forward to the chaos generated by a group of teens in the library, the casual conversations as they come in after school to sit in the teen room doing homework or hanging out at the computers. I am tired of treading water, and while I am happy we didn’t sink, I didn’t enjoy the swim and I think I have water in my ear.

Looking for calm seas and a noisy library in 2022!

225 Grab & Go Kits, 33 Books, and 29 Book Bundle Kits were distributed to teens in FY21



Leaf Spray Painting was one of our first outdoor activities for teens



# Children’s Services: Moments to Savor

By Mariah Sewall, Children’s Librarian

I don’t know about you, but for me, time has been behaving strangely lately. It feels like it’s moving so fast that the weeks are blurring together...what do you mean, summer is almost over?! This summer it seemed that every day I would see a kid at the front desk, who I’ve known since they were a tiny toddler in my programs, and I would be forced to realize that they were actually taller than me. Or that the kids in some of my first book groups are now in college. Didn’t I just hand you a copy of Mercy Watson YESTERDAY?!?! So I’ve been practicing mindfulness, of noticing those moments when time slows in a blur of a year, and you think *yes, this*. In reflecting on the past year, I’ve been lucky to have many of those very moments through my work here at the library.

There was the moment during our weekly Zoom storytime of playing music when in every square on the screen there was a happy face with a different instrument (Ukulele! Drum! Trumpet! Train whistle!) and we all played music together/apart in what has to be the world’s cutest improv band. Or the moment when I was reading a story aloud to my computer screen for Zoom storytime, and I watched a child and parent engage with the story together, pointing to the pictures and having a discussion, and I thought *maybe this Zoom storytime has more going for it than I thought it would*.

There was the enthusiastic greeting I got from a toddler who I had never interacted with in real life, but who according to his mom, watched my video storytimes every week without fail.

There were the stories and pictures I received from families who had assembled their science kits together, (including my own family), who let me know how much fun they had building their science

contraption, and then testing it out (in the case of my nieces, while wearing full princess gear).

There were the kids who, the day after I sent a video of myself booktalking all the latest releases in the kid’s department, came in to check out all those great books they had heard about. One of them described the cover and I was able to say, “Oh, you mean THIS BOOK!?” feeling all magical and Mary Poppins-ish.

This last year had challenges, but in the midst of the challenges I’m so grateful for the opportunity to work in a community that I love, doing a job that I love! As we move into our new year, I’m looking forward to more of these time-slowng moments, and I hope that I can help to create those moments for you as well! What makes a *Yes, this moment* for you? Is it snuggling and reading the perfect book with your child? Is it a family board game? Is it creating? Whatever it may be, I welcome your input as together we create a life with plenty of moments worth savoring!



The restrictions didn’t keep these patrons from enjoying some reading time



Lindsey and her Puppet Pals entertain in the tent



Chewonki’s Owl Program is very popular



# Volunteering in 2021

One of the most amazing characteristics of Topsham is the sheer number of people who volunteer their time to help others. We are always humbled by the dedication of those who choose to spend their personal time helping out at the library. This year has been no exception. Over the course of the last 12 months, volunteers have provided over 60 hours a week of unpaid work. That is the equivalent of nearly \$90,000 according to Independent Sector, the only national organization that brings together nonprofits, foundations, and corporations engaged in every kind of charitable endeavor.

Jeffrey Hanscom and Teri Schrock are two such hard-working folks who are long-time volunteers. They were among the first group of people who offered to return to volunteering after the Covid



Teri Schrock likes to spend her time in the fiction stacks

We are so grateful to our dedicated 2021 shelvees: Les Borodinsky, Pat Folger, Michaela Haake, Jeff Hanscom, Sam Jamison, Peggy Lord, Michelle Mathieu, Claire McCrea, Sue Mooney, Nick Picard, Vicky Savoie, Mary Schreiber, Teri Schrock, and Joann Strand.

shutdown of 2020. When asked about working at the library, here are some of the things they said.

Teri was very excited to be able to retire and spend some of her time at the library. An avid reader, she participated in the library’s Mystery Readers Roundtable run by staff member, Linda Meadows. She always liked the library and has had a library card for years. For her, volunteering at the library was a “no brainer!”

Jeff started volunteering in 2017. Jeff has been instrumental in keeping the books in the Children’s Room in order, which can be a huge feat. Many children’s books are thinner than adult books and the shelves are lower to the ground. You can fit twice as many children’s books on a shelving cart as you can adult books. Not everyone loves shelving children’s books. (Sorry, Mariah!)

Jeff doesn’t see this as a problem. It may take a little more time to shelve in the Children’s Room but he says he enjoys the stories that the library returns tell. He enjoys seeing what is going out and what is coming back in the room.

When he has books on taking care of a puppy to shelve, he knows that someone may have a new pet. When he sees several books on losing a grandparent, he knows that someone is dealing with loss. Jeff explains that the items on his shelving carts tell a story.

When asked why they came back to volunteering last October, they both shared how much they had missed the work. Both Jeff and Teri said they felt comfortable with the library’s safety protocols. Teri likes that we have hand sanitizer EVERYWHERE!

They missed seeing the staff and other volunteers. Like so many of our patrons,

Teri said that she looked forward to coming to pick up her books, just so she could talk to her friends here.

Jeff reported that he jumped at the chance to get back in. He likes putting things in order and the Children’s Room always needs it! He admits to feeling a little sad about not having as many kids and adults in the building as pre-pandemic times. However, he sees that things are picking up and expects that we will be buzzing with activity again.

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Jeff Hanscom prefers shelving picture books



Our gardens are maintained by volunteers, as well

Over the course of the last 12 months, volunteers have provided over 60 hours a week of unpaid work

Contributions to the Topsham Public Library are tax deductible.

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