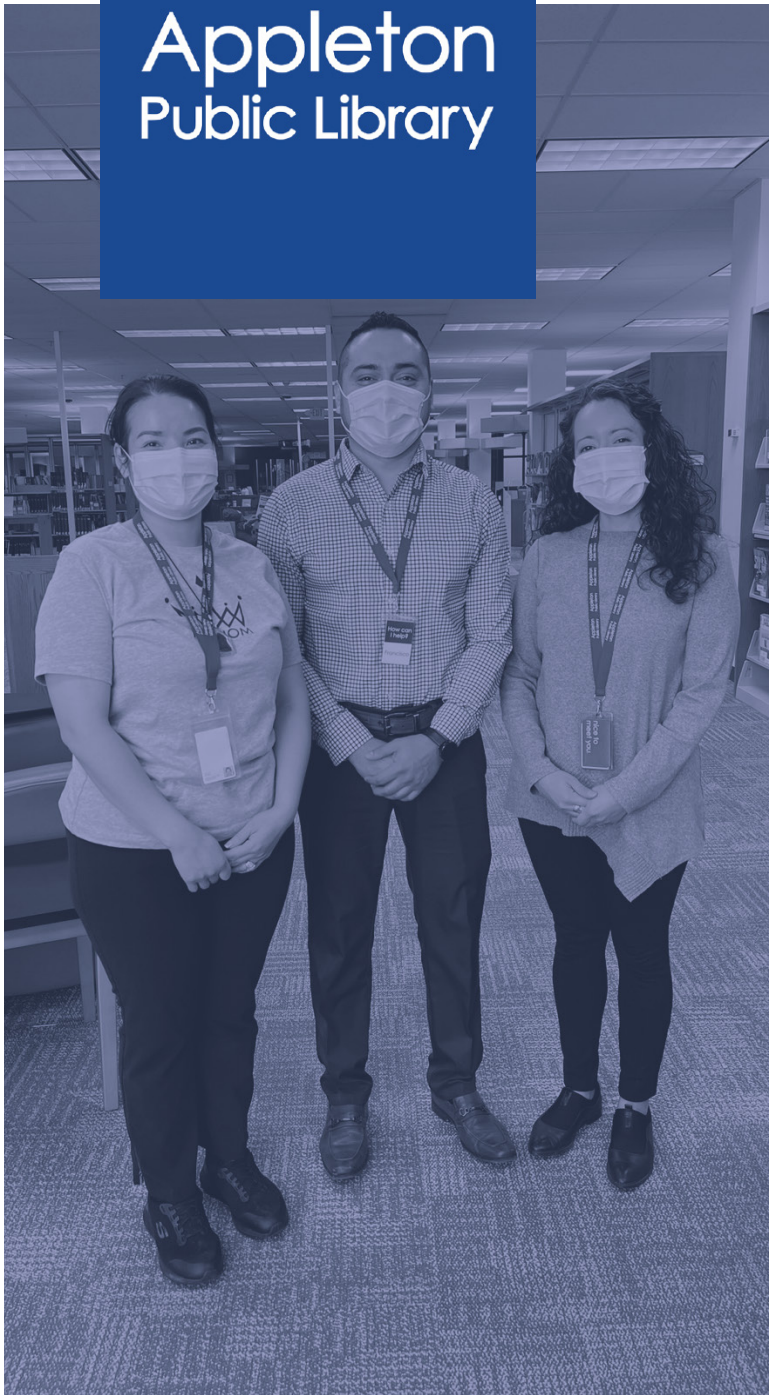


Appleton Public Library



OUR MISSION

**Learn, know, gather,
grow – your center
of community life.**

OUR VISION

**Where potential
is transformed
into reality.**

Library Trustees

NANCY SCHEUERMAN,
PRESIDENT

MARGRET MANN,
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KATIE VAN ZEELAND,
ALDERPERSON

UMIKA SIVASAMY,
TEEN REPRESENTATIVE

Director's Message

A public library does not exist in isolation. What is happening in our community, the country, and around the world impacts what we do. Libraries at their best co-create alongside their communities.

Overall, 2021 was a year of transition and resilience - as we navigated through periods of extraordinary change, unexpected challenges and new opportunities. As the year began, we re-framed our expectations as we continued to work through the fluctuations brought on by the pandemic.

Transitions can be difficult and lead to confusion, frustration, and a sense of loss of control. However, transitions can also lead to periods of growth, excitement, creativity, and accomplishments as we move on to new beginnings. Over the last year we have been grateful to return to face-to-face services, engage with our wonderful community partners and provide new and creative outreach opportunities. There are many milestones from 2021 to be recognized and you will read about some of them in this report.

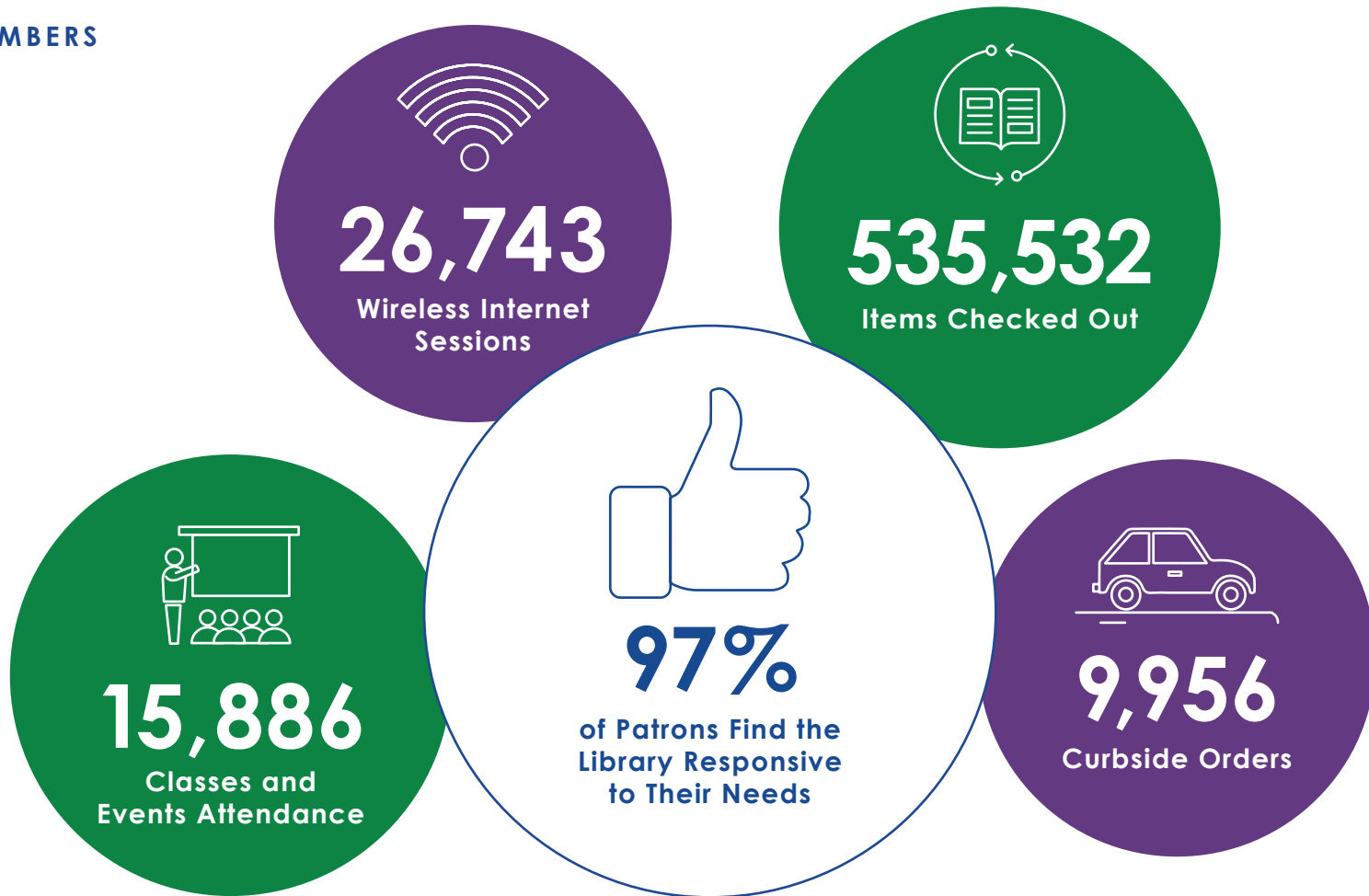
Our staff thrive on helping people. They strive to provide a welcoming library with equitable access to the numerous resources and services we offer. They knew from first-hand experience that the biggest thing we could do to eliminate barriers to library service was to put an end to overdue fines - which were disproportionately impacting children and lower income families, and were not effective at getting materials back in time. At staff's urging, our Library Board of Trustees implemented this change and overdue fines became a thing of the past.

In September 2022, we will celebrate the 125th year since the City of Appleton established a public library. In that time, we have gone through many periods of transition alongside our community. We are always evolving and growing and changing with you. We look forward to the next phase of growth, creativity and excitement.

COLLEEN RORTVEDT,
LIBRARY DIRECTOR



BY THE NUMBERS



EXPENSES AND REVENUES

\$4,548,441

Program Expenses

\$211,881.11

Capital Expenses

\$1,241,650

Program Revenues

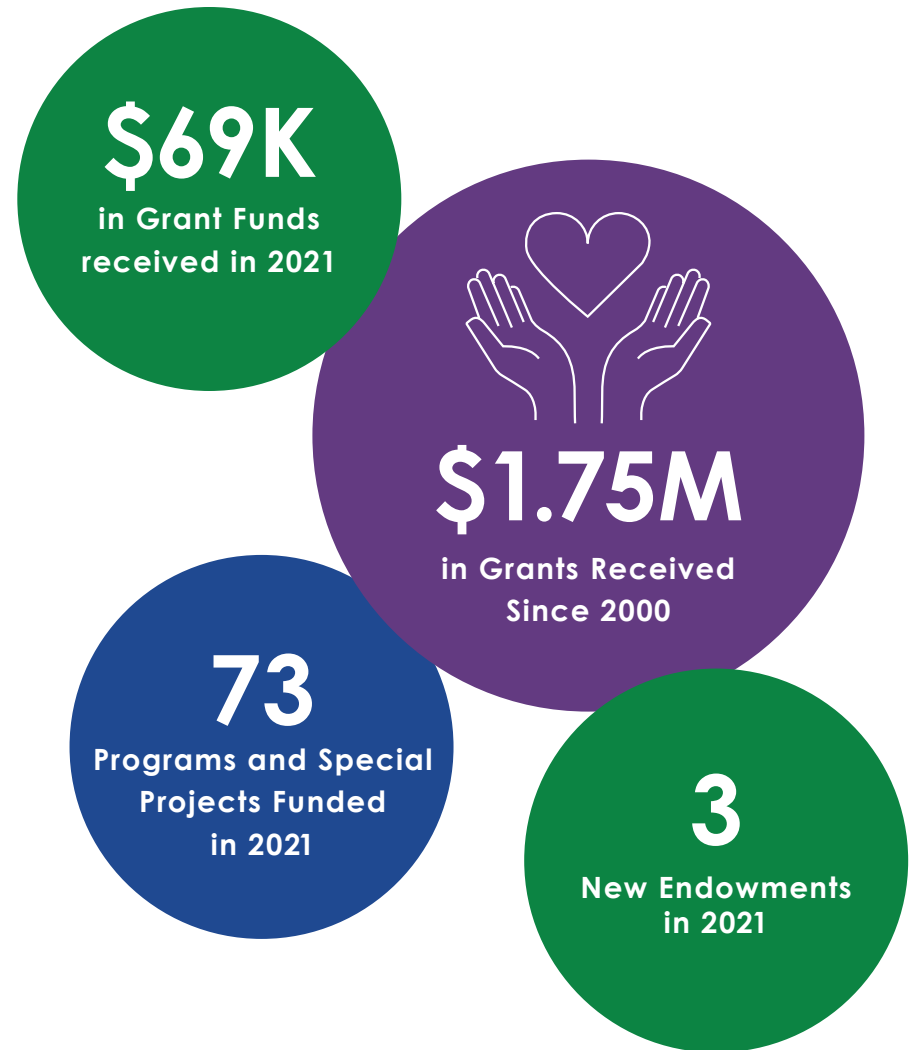
\$181,444.51

Grants



A special thank you to Friends of Appleton Public Library - who use donations and grant funds to support the library's mission. Friends' grants are essential in our ability to provide innovative and creative library programs and services. We are grateful to have a strong partnership.

Last year, three new endowments were created by couples who exemplify how our community is made stronger when we work together. Sandra and Dr. Monroe Trout, Connie and Peter Roop, and Judy and Austin Boncher have generously donated funds to create agency endowments as a permanent source of funding for Appleton Public Library.



In turn, Friends is partnering with the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region to create the endowments. The Community Foundation provides a prudent investment vehicle for these generous gifts, which ensures we will have much needed resources for the future. The principal of each fund is protected in perpetuity with Friends receiving annual distributions from the interest. It is a gift for many generations.

We support and sustain education for all ages.



CONTACT-FREE CURBSIDE PICK-UP

The library maintains a collection of materials that cover the breadth of changing needs, interests and formats, and every year we checkout hundreds of thousands of items. Our materials support education, learning, and literacy needs in our community. In addition, we embrace the important role library materials can provide for leisure and their ability to enhance and enrich our community members' lives.

Early 2021 brought excitement as we

were able to offer in-library services. For those who preferred contact-free service, or an easy and fast way to pick up materials, we continued to provide curbside pick-up.

Our ultimate goal is to make sure our community feels comfortable and welcomed using their library. Curbside gave us one way to achieve that during these uncertain times. We continued to see curbside be a popular option with almost 10,000 orders in 2021.

SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM

Helping support the educational needs of our community remains a critical library service. Research shows children and teens who do not engage in reading activities throughout the summer are susceptible to losing an average of three months of learning achievement. This loss is cumulative from one year to the next, regardless of the quality of the school. Our summer library program helped our youth fight summer learning loss by providing easy access to books and a fun and engaging experience.

Realizing 2020 brought parents and caregivers digital fatigue, we added our paper Summer Library Program back

into the mix. This was well-received as nearly half of those registered for the program chose the paper option.

Part of our strategy for engaging our community includes meeting them where they are. In order to do this, we increased our Summer Library Program outreach efforts last year. Visiting places like Mead Pool, Fox Valley Estates Mobile, Long Cheng Marketplace and more.

We strengthened existing relationships within our community and fostered new relationships with those who previously were not library users. In total, nearly 2,000 community members signed up for the Summer Library Program.



1,949

Summer Library Program Participants

“[Through our Summer Library Program outreach] we found pockets of people who didn’t know we belonged to them - we’re their library.”

- Ann, Children’s Services Supervisor



2,224

Library Cards Created



COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

We connect with partners to share knowledge and information.



LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECT

Our community engagement approach is rooted in 21st century librarianship, which prioritizes community members, community issues, and local knowledge to inform library spaces, programs, services, collections and partnerships. We address community needs and opportunities as they emerge and evolve. We are intentional about engaging our community through direct service, relationship building, and one-on-one learning conversations.

One major area for community engagement is the library building project. In March of 2021, the Appleton Public Library Board of Trustees and City of Appleton Common Council selected Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) for design and engineering services for the library at our current location.

During the request for proposal interviews, SOM demonstrated an understanding and approach to the

project that illustrated their depth of experience and knowledge in library design, construction and sustainability.

Perhaps most importantly, they understood the critical need to garner meaningful public input. Immediately, SOM jumped into the project with staff interviews and workshops. This helped them understand how the library needs to function in order to provide effective service for our community members.

To help inform the project, a 28 member Library Building Project Advisory Committee was created. The committee consisted of stakeholders with a broad spectrum of insights related to the community. SOM embraced the Library Building Project Advisory Committee and welcomed their input into the goals and design of the library. In addition to the advisory committee, SOM developed additional outlets to gather community input and feedback including:

- A public survey completed by over 700 people
- Virtual Community Meetings
- 11 Community Focus Groups
- In-person and online feedback forms



“What has happened - all of the information [from the community input] - has been embedded into our thinking. We can design great things, but we need your input.”

*- Jason, Library Architect
on the importance of community engagement*

EDUCATE AND INSPIRE YOUTH

We ensure that children and teens find a supportive place for their futures.

“Other than in the field of education, there are really few places that focus their efforts on offering positive programming specifically for teens. So many niches are focused primarily on the infant/child and adult populations. The library is truly a unique place!”

- Emely, Teen Librarian



TEEN AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Our teens are our future. Looking for a way for teens to develop a sense of belonging, a safe place to exchange ideas, have fun and be a teen, we created our Teen Ambassador Program.

We meet monthly to discuss what's happening at the library. Teens offer input to help shape future programming and contribute their talents in ways that feel comfortable for them. That may include writing a teen newsletter article, making a book list of their favorite reads, or creating a short video showcasing a DIY and more.

Last year our teen ambassadors were essential in helping us spread the word to reach other teens during our building project focus groups. The teen focus group was one of the highest attended focus groups and the feedback received during the meeting was pivotal in creating the teen space for the new library.

ANJI PLAY - ROAMING RUCKUS

Understanding children learn through play, our Children's Services staff focused on how they could continue to provide opportunities for play for our youngest community members in a safe environment.

We partnered with staff from the Building For Kids Children's Museum to host 14 outdoor Anji Play sessions.

Anji Play is an educational philosophy and comprehensive curriculum created by Cheng Xueqin in Anji County, China. It strives to teach adults how to create an environment which maximizes the amount of learning, problem solving, and creative development of children.

Staff provide a space and open-ended materials. Then staff and caregivers are encouraged to step back. By stepping back, we allow children to take control of their own play and hands-on learning. From this they gain self-confidence through trial and error. At the end of each session, adults and children are encouraged to reflect on their discoveries, decisions and outcomes.

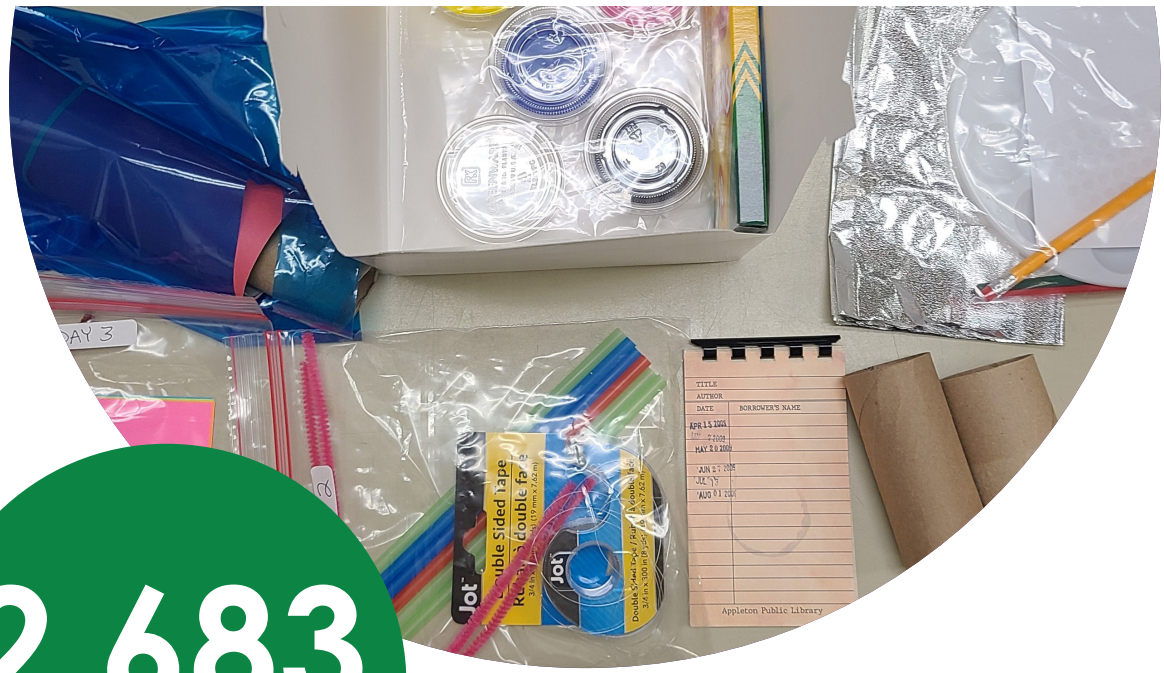


“I believe [my child’s] experiences at Roaming Ruckus have helped him be more flexible in his thinking, and more open to persevering even when things don’t work the first time. Last time we were at one, another kid became very upset when the sculpture they’d been building together toppled over and I heard [him] say, “It’s OK. Let’s take a breath. We can just build it again!”

- Jessi, Parent

CREATION AND INNOVATION

We are a platform that sparks discovery, development and originality.



2,683

Take 'N' Create
Packs Distributed

TAKE 'N' CREATE PACKS

Hands-on crafts and activities are a popular part of many of our in-person programs. When we needed to shift our programming strategy to focus on virtual offerings during times of peak COVID-19 transmission rates, we looked for ways we could still provide this service.

A hands-on craft experience can't be duplicated on the screen. With that in mind, we created packs of materials families and teens could pick up at the library and take home with them. The packs included various types of crafts and activities.

Our Take 'N' Create Packs for children are both fun and educational. They encourage creativity and build confidence as children learn to explore and manipulate resources to create an artistic expression that is unique to them. They also provide a screen-free activity that can be both social and relaxing.

Our Teen Take 'N' Create Packs gave us a way to stay connected with teens, provide a creative outlet for them, and help them stay grounded during an uncertain time.

“My kiddos
always look
forward
to these!”

- Luann, Parent

JJ'S LAUNDROMAT

Looking for ways to connect with community members outside the four walls of the library, we partnered with JJ's Laundromat to create a read, play and learn space inside their facility on College Avenue.

An independent evaluation from New York University found that placing a read, play and learn space in a laundromat significantly enhances a child's access to books. In addition, it increases time spent on activities that support school readiness such as talking, reading, writing, singing and playing.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Sawyer Family Fund within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, we were able to purchase LaundryCare Read, Play & Learn Kits and create a special space for families.

The first of its kind in the Fox Valley, the read, learn and play space inside JJ's includes a comfortable seating area, high-quality books families can take home with them, toys and other materials. It is designed to help parents engage in literacy-rich interactions with their children during laundry time.

“It's fun to see the area active with kids doing something positive, and even more enjoyable when parents are active in the area, reading and playing with their children.”

- Lance, Owner of JJ's Laundromat



ENGAGED AND CONNECTED

We focus on
how to make
a difference in
people's lives.

86

Number of Times
Laptops Were
Checked Out

8,687

Number of
Accounts Restored



GOING FINE-FREE

In the summer of 2021, we welcomed patrons back to the library by saying goodbye to assessing late fees and eliminating all fines on accounts.

Our organizational values include ensuring all community members have equitable access to library materials, programs and services. Studies show late fees can be a significant barrier to access and can drive people away from using the library. Late fees often impact those who can least afford them - individuals that are low-income and children.

Before going fine-free, over 11% of our patron database was blocked from checking out materials due to fines. Concernedly, 16% of juvenile patrons were blocked - illustrating the disproportionate impact on children.

Once we eliminated fines, staff reported higher use and an increase in customer satisfaction and positive interactions with library patrons.

LAPTOPS FOR CHECKOUT

Libraries across the country continue to find unique ways to serve their communities. Over the last several years, libraries have looked for new opportunities to lend materials and equipment.

Public computer access continues to be a popular and important service. Thanks to a grant from the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin we were able to purchase laptops for our community to checkout. Providing this important service helped us support the informational, educational, health, and wellness needs of individuals and families in our community,



ENRICHED EXPERIENCES

We provide inclusive, timely, and community interest aligned experiences.

COMMUNITY CHORDS

During the spring of 2021, we developed Community Chords as a way to recognize and remember the Hmong people's stories, history, and contributions in the Vietnam War.

Five artists were selected to create a work of art that celebrated the Hmong culture and experience. Tying to the significance of music in the Hmong culture, the artwork was created on community-donated pianos. The finished pianos were on display across the community, including at the library, the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Appleton Downtown Inc., River Thyme Bistro and Long Cheng Marketplace. Community members were encouraged to visit and play the pianos while learning more about the Hmong culture.

100+
Community Members
Engaged in
Community Chords



Funded by a grant received through Wisconsin Library Service Ideas to Action Fund, the initiative successfully highlighted Hmong narratives and skills, and brought people together through a shared love of music, art and literacy - all components that make Appleton a thriving community.

“Basic needs for humans are shelter, food, water and air - but I feel mostly love, empathy and compassion is something that we all need.”

- Marisol, Library Partner speaking on the power of humanity



IMMIGRANT JOURNEYS

During the summer of 2021, we welcomed a new traveling exhibit to the library - Immigrant Journeys from South of the Border. The exhibit, a project of Wisconsin Humanities, produced in partnership with Centro Hispano of Dane County with stories by journalist Bill Berry and photographs by Gary Porter, featured eight Wisconsinites. Their stories, together with their photographic portraits, offered a different entry point into the national conversation about immigration.

After viewing the exhibit, we welcomed community members to take home a 30-day reflection journal. The reflection

journal, created by local artist Marisol Encarnacion (pictured above), provided community members a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings. The journal included prompts and questions such as: we are all worthy; what I know about inclusion; do I have any biases or stereotypes?; why should we all have our basic needs met?

The personal stories presented in the exhibit combined with the reflection journal provided an opportunity for our community to reflect more deeply on the humanity and complexity of our individual life journeys.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR ALL

We give our community opportunities for growth, self-instruction and inquiry.



141

Teen Program Attendance



11,276

Children's Program Attendance

IN-PERSON CLASSES AND EVENTS

Every year we welcome tens of thousands of patrons into the library for a variety of classes and events. While materials are our bread and butter, our programming is where we add an extra layer of engagement with our community.

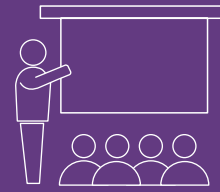
As COVID-19 vaccines became more available and cases in our community dropped over the summer, we began expanding our in-person offerings. Putting people and safety first is our goal - so we focused our efforts on creating outdoor options.

We continued our partnership with Appleton Downtown Inc. and Appleton Parks and Recreation to provide Storywalks. Other community favorites included a nature walk and breathing session for adults.

Partnering with Kiwanis and the Appleton Police Department we introduced a new event this year - Drive Up Storytime. Families drove into our parking lot and listened to an Appleton Police Officer read a book while following along with their free copy.



4,469
Adult Program Attendance



623
Classes and Events

VIRTUAL CLASSES AND EVENTS

With COVID-19 cases rising and falling throughout 2021, there were times we needed to pivot from in-person programming in order to mitigate risk. We took our knowledge and experiences from 2020 and successfully provided a continuity of programming through our various virtual platforms.

Our virtual storytime offered interactive experiences where children and caregivers could talk, play, and sing in a safe environment. Our popular Find Your Ancestors series provided people across the country with genealogy tips and tricks. Our Civic Conversations sparked important dialog among community members with topics ranging from food insecurity to reparations. Our Small Business - Big Impact Storytelling series helped support our local small businesses.

Between virtual and in-person options, we provided our community with over 600 class and event offerings.





ANNUAL REPORT

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