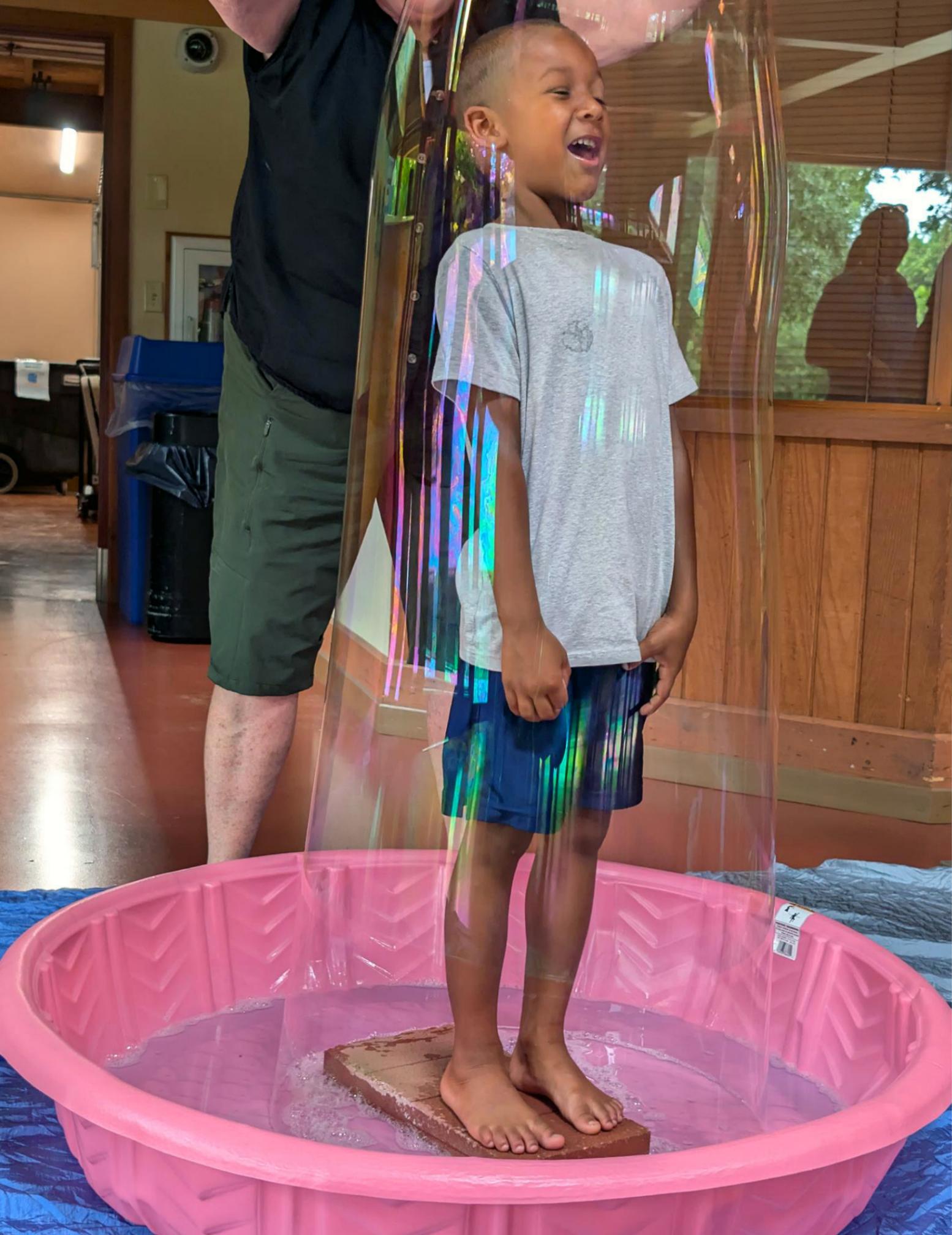




APPLETON PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Annual Report 2024-2025



Director's Message

The last year asked a lot of the library – both of our staff and of our community.

When we moved into our second temporary library in early 2024, you didn't miss a beat. You found us, supported us, and reminded us just how important the library is to Appleton. That steady support helped carry us through the uncertainty and the long stretch of transition.

At the same time, our staff kept everything moving through creativity, resilience, and sometimes plain old grit. They adapted, improvised, and found new ways to keep services going in a space that was never meant to be permanent, but that served us well for our time in the space. Their determination and care for the community never wavered.



This report reflects the determination and heart it took to keep the library thriving during a big year of change. While 2024 may feel like a distant memory, we're still grateful - for your trust, for your patience, and for the way you've welcomed us back downtown in our new home.

Colleen Rortved
Library Director

Our Mission

Learn, know, gather, grow -
your center of community life.

Our Vision

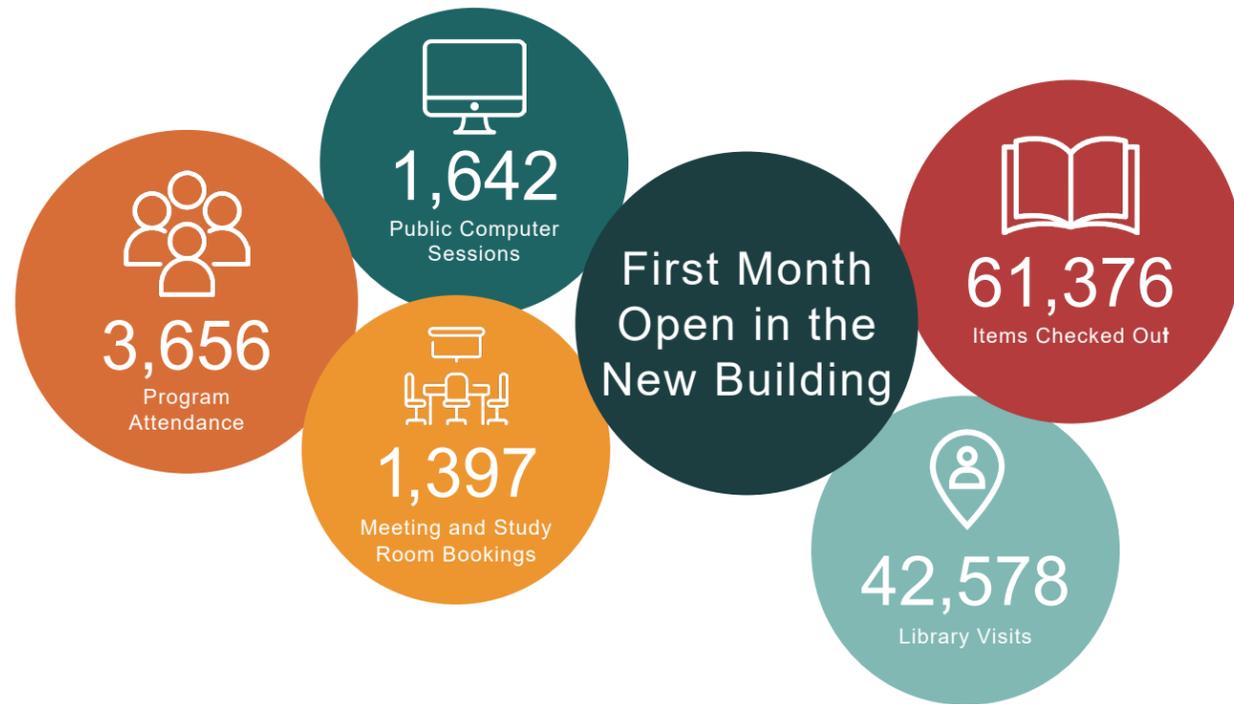
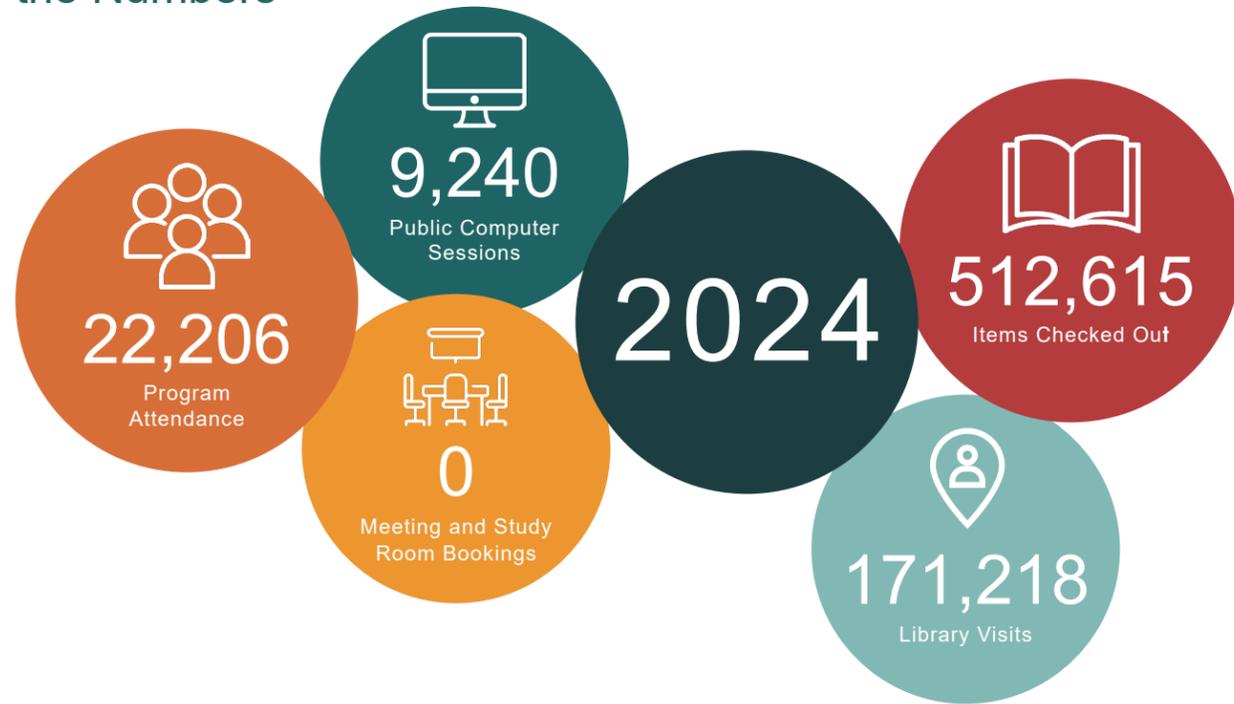
Where potential is
transformed into reality.

2024 Library Board of Trustees

Margret Mann - President
Jason Brozek - Vice President
Nanette Bunnow
John Keller
Peter Lee

Mary Lokensgard
Bastia Looker
Lisa Nett
Nancy Scheuerman
Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland

By the Numbers



Friends of Appleton Public Library

A special thanks to Friends of Appleton Public Library - who use donations to 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're grateful to have a strong partnership.



Expenses and Revenues

\$5,105,808

Expenses

\$27,510,569

Capital Expenses

\$1,607,090

Revenues

\$115,448

Grants



\$2M

in Grants Received Since 2000



\$121K

in Grants Funds Received in 2024



117

Programs and Special Projects Funded in 2024

Hub of Learning and Literacy

We support and sustain education for all ages.



Summer Library Program

Research shows students who don't 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.

Helping support the educational needs of our community is a critical library service. Our summer library program helps to fight summer learning loss by providing easy access to books and a fun and

engaging experience - including offering incentives such as ice cream with the mayor and a building construction tour.

There are other important benefits to participating in summer library programs and they're not just for children and teens. Our adult program offers lifelong learning opportunities which helps lead to a more enriching and fulfilling life.

In total, just over 1,000 adults, teens and children signed up for the program.



1,002

Summer Library Program
Participants



79%

of Adults Surveyed
Learned Something New



84%

of Children Completed
the Program

Collaborative Environment

We connect with partners to share knowledge and information.



Friends of Appleton Public Library Capital Campaign

In late 2023, Friends of Appleton Public Library launched the public phase of their Building Beyond Words Capital Campaign. Their goal was to provide \$12 million to support the City of Appleton's investment and ensure the library had the needed features and enhancements to serve and advance the community.

Over the course of 2024, Friends staff, their board of directors, and the Building Beyond Words capital campaign committee worked tirelessly to complete their fundraising goal. They offered unique opportunities for community members to

engage with fundraising efforts, such as sharing community stories of impact and working with local businesses to provide eggroll sales. Three local children even hosted a lemonade stand raising \$185.

"This project is a testament to the power of community support," said Nanci Micke, Friends of Appleton Public Library Board President. "We are incredibly thankful to our generous donors who helped us achieve our fundraising goal. Our vision was to help our city create a library that will serve many generations to come and it's amazing to see that become a reality."



625

Number of Donors



\$5 - \$3M

Range of Gifts



88%

Of Support Came From
Individuals or Foundations

Educate and Inspire Youth

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



200+

Event Attendees

A Reopening Celebration

In late January 2024, we held a library-wide sweets-themed reopening celebration to welcome the community to our second temporary library. The event featured a Squishmallow drawing, a sugary scavenger hunt, a variety of candy-themed crafts and games, biographies on historical candy makers and larger than life candy decorations. Over 200 people visited the craft stations and 46 new library cards were made throughout the day.

Civic Engagement

To help get kids excited about the voting process and encourage civic engagement, our Children's Services department held a mock election last fall. Children were invited to cast a vote for their favorite of six storybook characters - Dogman, Gerald and Piggy, Pete the Cat, Princess in Black, Penelope Rex, and Mother Bruce.

The experience included a voting booth set up with ballots, a ballot box, and "I Voted" stickers. By a margin of just five votes, Dogman beat out Gerald and Piggy to win the election.



424

Children Cast Their Ballot in Our Mock Election

Creation and Innovation

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



30+

Students Crafted
Public Art

Construction Fence Art

During the winter of 2024, Mrs. Lucas, an Appleton Area School District art teacher, reached out to us about collaborating with her students on a public art project. The project gave students in her Drawing/ Painting 2 class the opportunity to create literary-themed artwork to be displayed on our construction fencing. Over 30 students collaborated on and created seven large pieces. Their creativity and dedication to the project brought joy, brightness, wonder, and curiosity to the construction site.

FlipSide

FlipSide is our online streaming service featuring local original music. We launched FlipSide in October 2018, as one of a handful of libraries showcasing local music - including libraries such as Seattle, Austin and Nashville Public Library. With just 12 albums on the site when launching, we have grown the collection to over 60 albums from over 50 local artists.

Thanks to the continued support of Friends of Appleton Public Library, our community curators, and musicians, FlipSide provides an opportunity to celebrate and create access points to local music.



61

Albums in the
FlipSide Collection

Engaged and Connected

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



Second Temporary Library

Our journey toward a new library has been fueled by community support. The generosity of Thompson Center on Lourdes, offering their future location when they learned of our need to relocate to a new temporary space in late 2023, stands as a powerful example of that support. This gesture not only ensured our ability to continue providing critical library services, but also strengthened the fabric of our community partnerships.

While not a flashy building, staff took great care into creating a welcoming environment for our community - even before we were able to officially open

the doors. In between our building closures during our move, we offered phone service hours for patrons to be able to connect with a person if they had a question or concern. Additionally, we offered various programs throughout the community to continue to engage with library users.

In January 2024 we opened the doors to our second temporary library - just a few short minutes away from our first temporary library. Our first large program, A Sweet New Temporary Location Grand Opening Celebration, featured candy-themed activities and games for all ages.

“[Staff] resilience, creativity, and positive attitude, even in less than ideal circumstances, exemplify the library's enduring spirit and commitment to service.”

Colleen Rortvedt, Library Director

Enriched Experiences

We provide experiences that are timely, inclusive and aligned with community interests.



Photo Credit: Robert Buettner



Photo Credit: Robert Buettner

Poet Laureate Program

In partnership with the Mayor's Office, we established the Appleton Poet Laureate program in 2024.

The idea for the program came from the community. Our local poets and poetry readers are active in the community - gathering and sharing their works. It was their advocacy to see a poet laureate program within our community that helped create the spark for the program.

The goal of the program - to elevate and celebrate the art of poetry in Appleton, fostering literacy, creativity, and community connection - aligns with our mission and our expertise.

Last summer, a team of library staff, city staff, and community members solicited

applications and made a recommendation to Mayor Woodford based on the poet's literary excellence, vision, potential to elevate the art of poetry, and commitment to a two-year term as the City of Appleton Poet Laureate.

In early fall, we had the pleasure of helping introduce the City of Appleton's first Poet Laureate, Cathryn Cofell at a community event. It was a wonderful evening celebrating poetry. At the event Cathryn shared her original poem "Appleton: A Love Story," while poet Sarah Gilbert read "The Library" by poet and Appleton resident Ellen Kort.

Ellen's family also unveiled a rendering of the poem, which is displayed on the donor wall in the new library.

"We're aiming to inspire artistic expression and nurture cultural understanding and enrich our community's shared narrative."

Adriana McCleer, Community Partnerships Supervisor

Services and Programs for All

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



Grand Opening

On a snowy February morning, we excitedly opened the doors to the new Appleton Public Library.

A project like this is never about just bricks and mortar, it's about the people who make it possible and the people it serves. Our community endured years of uncertainty; showing resilience, patience and an unwavering belief in the value of this library. When the time came, our community embraced the project with enthusiasm and generosity.

Our architects and engineers at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and our builders at The Boldt Company held the purpose of the library close - working alongside us to create a space that reflects not just what the library is, but what the library can be.

While we opened the doors to a new building, we also opened the doors to a future that has wonderful possibilities. We're excited to see the community use their new library and continue to share their stories along the way.



2,344

People Came to the Library on Opening Day



577

New, Replacement and Library Card Renewals on Opening Day



2,990

Items Checked Out on Opening Day



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