Building Hope

A change of perspective often begins with the smallest spark. A beam of light, a kind word, or a helping hand can dissipate the fog of our collective difficulties, allowing us to envision a brighter future for ourselves and for our community. And sometimes, that spark takes on a physical form.

Multnomah County Library is undergoing a transformation. New and revitalized spaces, full of light and hope, will bring us together to learn, explore ideas, and create opportunities that will enrich our community for decades to come. Last year, gifts to The Library Foundation brought 120,000 books and 11 programs to more than 190,000 people. In the coming year, your support will make life-changing programs and enhancements to library buildings possible, creating a brighter future for children and adults across our community.
THANKS TO YOUR GIFTS

When reading is about more than words and letters

Librarians reached children and their families last year with tens of thousands of books in 20 languages and cultures, along with workshops for parents on early brain development and storytimes in six languages and cultures. Partnerships with Head Starts, low-income health clinics, hospitals, teen parent programs, and programs for immigrants and refugees enabled the library to reach families with a crucial message: reading together at home will have lifelong benefits for your child.

Alondra is a bright and playful two-year-old, full of joyful energy to spare. On a warm spring afternoon, she skipped about the grounds of her family’s apartment building, moving with constant, purposeful motion. Until her mother, Ana Karina, set a book down in front of her. Coming full stop, the curious toddler immediately settled onto her mother’s lap.

It’s a tender scene — a mother and child reading together, connected by love and words. This moment is especially inspiring because Alondra’s mother did not learn to read as a child. Ana Karina was raised by a single mother near Michoacan, Mexico, where she worked hard from a young age to help her mother support the family. “I didn’t have time for school, so I never learned to read or write,” she says.

When Alondra was born, Ana Karina worried about how she would teach her child to read. She was afraid that her own inability to recognize letters or sound out words would impede her daughter’s progress. The library’s early literacy program reassured Ana Karina that she had just what she needed — the skills and motivation to support her daughter in learning to read. Sitting together quietly, they browse the pages of a book. Ana Karina asks her daughter questions about the pictures, engaging Alondra in conversation and supporting her natural curiosity and foundation for learning.

Thanks to the library’s Early Literacy team, Ana Karina learned that she could cuddle up and share books with her daughter, even if she did not have the ability to read. The pages they look at together help Alondra chart a course toward a lifelong love of reading. They also give Ana Karina a foundation for learning the letters herself. Inspired by all she has learned from the early childhood librarians, she plans to attend adult reading classes this year.
THANKS TO YOUR GIFTS
THE LIBRARY FOUNDATION
Inspiring the next generation of readers

Last year, tens of thousands of children and teens participated in library programs that help build the foundation for academic success. Librarians delivered books and talked with children and parents about library services at free lunch sites, housing developments, public parks and school parking lots across our community. The goal: keeping kids learning and reading despite the academic setbacks created by the pandemic.

Student Success

Much has changed since Ahlam’s first visit to Multnomah County Library. Just shy of five years old when she walked through the doors of the Capitol Hill Library, hand-in-hand with her mother, Ahlam recalls feeling a bit overwhelmed by the enormity of it all. She was quickly taken under the wing of youth librarians, who guided Ahlam to books that matched her interests and reading level.

This first trip to the library set the stage for hundreds of repeat visits. As young Ahlam’s interest and passion for reading and learning grew, she was drawn to library programs like Summer Reading. Her first gameboard, completed when she was just five, was a family affair — her older brothers and sisters reading with her, and encouraging her progress, from start to finish.

A yearning to emulate her older siblings, many of whom volunteered for Summer Reading, led Ahlam to ask librarians when she might volunteer. Although she was too young to sign up for the library’s volunteer program, youth librarians took her at her word. Ahlam became a junior helper, a role that kept her engaged in library events and outreach.

This summer marked Ahlam’s first year as a full-fledged Summer Reading volunteer. Now a middle school 6th grader, she loves doling out encouragement to budding young readers in her community. “Volunteering taught me to manage different personalities,” she says, “to enjoy the enthusiasm of young children and find patience for those who are learning.”

The Summer Reading volunteer program allows teens like Ahlam to build interpersonal and job skills, and a sense of responsibility, that translate to real-world experience. Throughout the summer of 2022, more than 439 volunteers gave back to their community while building their resumes. It’s a program designed to reach teens at a pivotal time, setting the stage for success in the workplace and in future studies.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

108,000 K-12 students received library cards through Library Connect.

100,000 young readers and teens participated in the library’s Summer Reading program.

36,000 books and e-books in 20+ languages and cultures reached tens of thousands of students through outreach programs and library collections.

333 summer sites, including childcare centers, parks, and lunch sites serving vulnerable children, received books and reading incentives delivered by library staff and volunteers.

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STEAM Learning

A space and a place to call their own

Maria knows firsthand what it feels like to be on the outside looking in.

Born in Egypt, she moved to the U.S. at the age of seven, with minimal English skills and little understanding of American culture. When a teacher recommended that Maria visit the library to improve her language skills, she enrolled in reading lessons at Rockwood Library. “The librarians were so kind, so influential,” she remembers. “They let me know I was welcome, and that I belonged.”

Last year, Maria returned to Rockwood as a Makerspace mentor, supporting students like Donovan, pictured here, in deepening their skills and experiences with STEAM. Balancing her busy schedule as a biology student at PSU with her duties at the Makerspace, she is a devoted mentor and advocate for the teens who frequent this interactive, collaborative learning space.

Working at the Makerspace feels to Maria like a seamless way to give back to the community, and to the library that welcomed her. She notes that teens often feel overlooked, and need someone to look up to at this important age when their skills and values are developing. Rockwood’s Makerspace offers teens a unique learning opportunity that is free, with hands-on technology experiences, knowledgeable mentors to guide participants, and concrete information about college, scholarships, and careers.

“If you’re bored, or if you want to learn a new skill, we’ll learn it with you. If you feel like you don’t belong, the library is here to support you, and to help you find connections. We are here for you.”

67,000 youth accessed educational materials that engaged children in STEAM learning.

25,000 activity kits featuring hands-on lessons in engineering, kinetic energy, and circuitry, along with instructions in five languages, went home with young learners.

More than 100 adult mentors volunteered thousands of hours to support youth in STEAM learning.

More than 75% of youth said they felt more confident and interested in science after participating in the library’s STEAM programs.
Beyond library walls

Shining a light on the importance of human connection

Multnomah County Library is an anchor for many, helping us find a way forward in difficult times. Many library programs take place outside of library walls — from book deliveries to thousands of elderly and homebound individuals to outreach programs for children and families at local parks, community centers, health clinics, school parking lots, immigrant and refugee organizations, and free lunch sites. At every stage of life, our library is a trusted resource.

Pha Tang grins ear-to-ear when Geoff and Karen from the library enter the lobby of his senior living community, warmly taking each of their hands in turn. He’s been counting the days until they arrive, eager to converse with them in Vietnamese and Mandarin, and to see what new movies and reading materials they have in store for him.

On his own since the age of 10, as a child Mr. Tang worked small jobs for merchants in Saigon — stocking shelves, carrying boxes, and helping with sales. As he busied himself, he learned to read in both Vietnamese and Mandarin by studying the labels on cans and packets he sold. It was not an easy life, but he made the most of it. He married, had three children, and reveled in his family.

When the Vietnam War ended, Mr. Tang and his family made plans to escape. While his wife and children were able to cross the border, he was captured and remanded to prison. Decades later, when Mr. Tang finally made it to the U.S., he was heartbroken to learn that his wife and children had moved on without him. Without the ability to speak or read in English, he felt adrift and despondent.

Today, Mr. Tang lives a peaceful but solitary life in a senior living facility. The facility’s small library is filled with books he cannot read, or has no interest in. Regular visits from Geoff and Karen bring more than just a steady supply of library materials to Mr. Tang. For him, they offer a rare opportunity for heartfelt conversation and laughter.

The library’s multi-lingual Outreach Services team visits isolated seniors and disabled individuals regularly, bringing books, music, movies, and friendship to those who are homebound. As Mr. Tang speaks of Geoff and Karen, his perpetually beaming face grows serious. “Without them, I would be immensely lonely, and life would be boring. Seeing them is the highlight of my month.”
Reimagining Our Libraries

A brighter future begins with access to 21st century learning tools, environments, and learning experiences.

In 2020, our library embarked on a groundbreaking, six-year building plan designed to create libraries that will transform our region, including an expansive new library for East County. These projects will increase our library system’s space by nearly 60%, opening the possibilities for meaningful learning experiences that our libraries cannot offer today. Eight of our libraries will be renovated or rebuilt, and the 11 remaining public buildings will be remodeled, creating innovative, culturally relevant resources and services, from interactive early learning spaces and makerspaces to job resource centers and technology labs.

These library designs will transform neighborhoods, engaging children and adults in dynamic learning opportunities. The Library Foundation’s support will enable the library to create engaging learning spaces for our youngest learners, and environments for school age-children, and teens, as well as access to STEAM learning and outdoor gathering spaces that take in natural surroundings.

Financials

Expenditures were 41% of dollars raised and 3.6% of dollars spent.

Support for the Library
$2.15 million from The Library Foundation

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2022

Revenues, gains and other support
- Contributions and grants: $1,828,109
- Interest and dividend income: $518,477
- Net decrease, revocable planned gifts: $(112,631)
- Other: $3,237
- Total revenues, gains and other support: $2,362,422

Expenses
- Program services: 85.4%
- General and administrative: 11%
- Fundraising: 3.6%
- Early literacy: 16%
- School-age literacy: 48.5%
- Books and materials: 3.6%
- Arts, culture and humanities programming: 0.8%
- Learning for life: 3.2%
- Other: 0.2%
- Total expenses: $2,153,657

Change in net assets
- Net assets, beginning of year: $24,280,153
- Net assets, end of year: $21,992,263

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Thank you for helping our library create strong readers for life.

Learn more at www.libraryfoundation.org