

Youth Services at a Glance

June-July-August 2025 Summer Wrap

Teacher Packs- 1

Youth Programs- 78

Youth Attendance- 4417

General Interest Programs- 45

General Interest Attendance- 3989

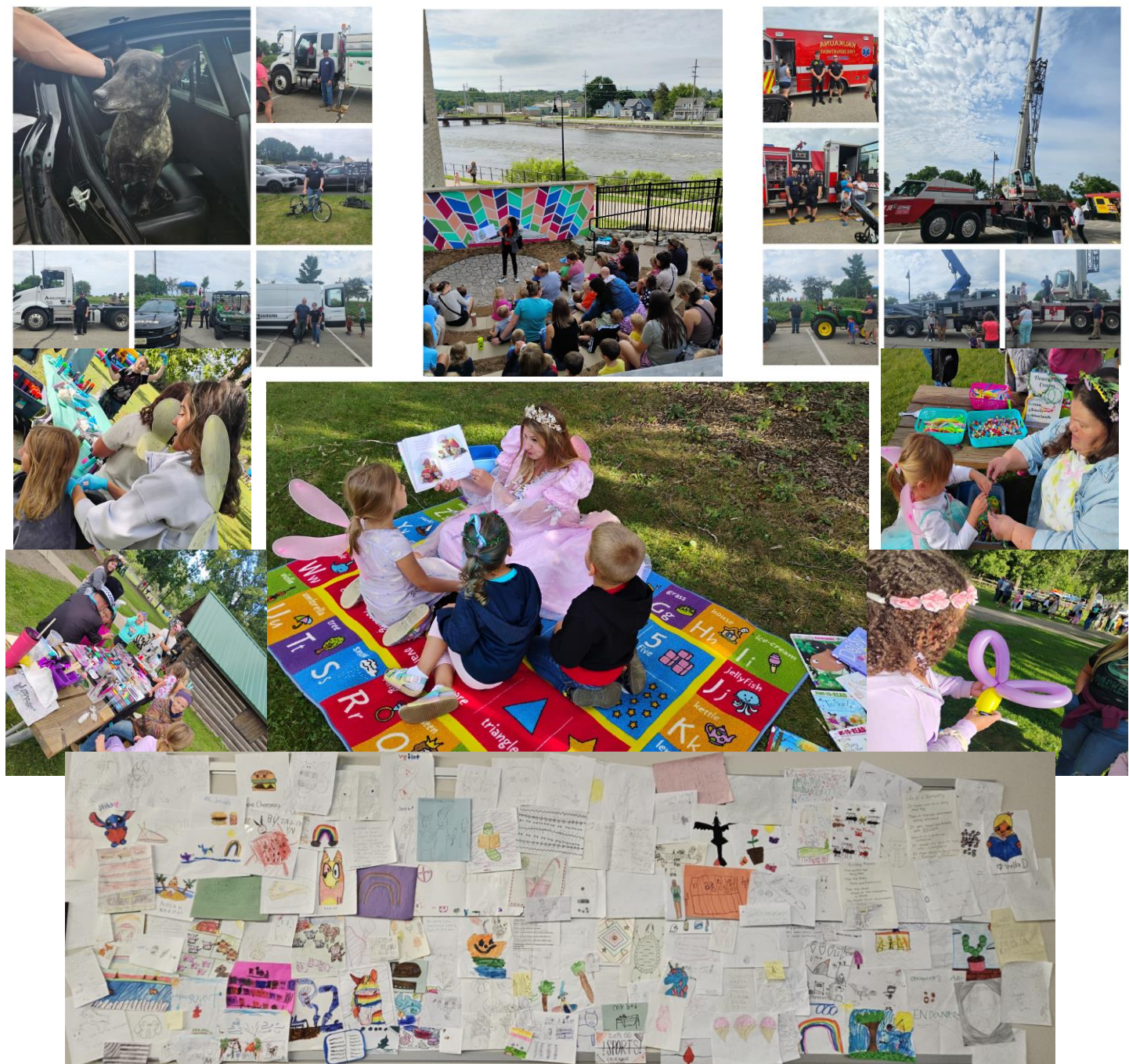
Program Highlights

From book fairs, bubbles, and candles to movies, gardens, and wizards, the fun never ends at Kaukauna Public Library! Check out some of our favorite summer programming moments below.



Community Outreach & Collaboration

Touch-a-Truck, Fairy Walk, and Garden Storytime, oh my!



Play Make Learn 2025

This year, I was awarded a scholarship through OWLS to attend the Play Make Learn conference in Madison. The theme was Breaking and Mending: Exploring Messiness, Creativity, and Transformation in Education. The sessions focused on various areas of STEAM education for all ages, in both formal and informal settings. The goal of this conference is to help build confidence in allowing playful experimentations that lead to human-centered learning environments, and how to adapt this to a library setting.

Wednesday, August 20

Wisconsin Makerspace Summit: This time was about self-led hands-on exploration. The room was filled with dozens of educators and leaders providing the tools to experience 3D printers, coding tools, and various robotic technologies. This was an excellent opportunity to connect with peers and experts and walk away with new program ideas and innovative ways to integrate STEAM into library spaces.

Communities of Belonging: During this session, we were given the opportunity to tour the Madison Children's Museum and evaluate the space for inclusivity and equity. It was interesting to see how each space was used to maximize adaptive exhibits and reduce barriers. Every space was welcoming and had modified additions to create meaningful experiences for all. The art area was magnificent, featuring sensory-friendly zones and multilingual signs. My favorite takeaway was the marker holder; I am hoping to replicate their design in the coming year.

Thursday, August 21

Drawing Insights From the Intersection of Art and Science in Informal Learning Environments: This session brought the worlds of art and science together to identify the similarities and how blending the two can deepen learning and engagement. Educators from the Adler Planetarium led the session, walking participants through one of their most popular programs, which explores solar eclipses. The addition of art helps to make STEAM concepts more approachable, and science adds depth and context to artistic expression.

Discovery Storytime: When the Library is a Laboratory: Presenter Rob Polivka led a packed room through the magic of library science and the methods that have worked best. Using nonfiction titles as the base for each program and pairing simple science activities to enhance learning and build literacy alongside critical thinking. We often use a similar model during our Little Learners storytime and will continue to branch out and explore other ways to spark curiosity with our youngest patrons.

Imagined Plants: Connecting Imagination with Literacy, Art, and Science at Any Grade Level: Educators from the Paine Art Center and Gardens led this session on incorporating non-traditional craft supplies to integrate art standards through science. Each participant was given time to design and create a plant using the materials provided. We then detailed the plant parts and identified how these could be used in nature to support photosynthesis, pollination, and other plant-based needs. This session reminds us how simple it is to pivot based on ages and skill levels in attendance, and to nurture scientific thinking through storytelling and artistic expression.

Breaking Cycles of Stress, Mending Through Creativity: Art-Based Mindfulness for Educators:

This session focused on self-care and mental health. As many others in service-based careers, librarians are constantly giving. Presenters shared practices that can be used on a professional and personal level to support wellness and resilience. Using art-based strategies to promote emotional balance is an easy and mindful way to allow for that pause throughout our day.

Friday, August 22

PLIX Data Gems: Early Data Literacy Through Creative Learning: With the help of the MIT PLIX presenters, we learned how to make science data entry fun using wearable data trackers. The MIT PLIX (Public Library Innovation Exchange) team uses research designed for public libraries to develop STEAM learning experiences. To quote directly from PLIX, “PLIX programs support learners as Designers – rather than consumers – of technology, Creators – rather than recipients – of knowledge, Scientists and artists – rather than one or the other.” To best convey this outlook, each table was provided with various beads and cord to create a personal pocket-sized data collector. This activity outlined how to integrate data literacy into programs to enhance skills and concepts, including collecting and interpreting data, data representations, and analysis for decision-making.

Breaking, Mending, and Learning: Playful Experimentation with PBS Kids: During this session, we gained new perspectives on how to utilize library programs to help foster deeper engagement and empower our youngest patrons. The idea is to let go and allow children to make mistakes and learn through hands-on exploration. A big takeaway was the absence of examples when leading youth programs. While many children will use a displayed example simply as a guide, others may see this as the way it must be done, down to the exact color and shape. This feeling is exacerbated if their outcome is different than the example, creating a feeling of being unsafe and anxious. We can see this in action by using the process or product model in early childhood. One way we avoid this in our library programs is to provide multiple examples of varying skills to display. We often save creations left behind for this exact reason.

Art as Praxis: The Liberating Potential of Art Divorced From Aesthetics Across Research, Design, and Education: In this session, we examined art through an educational and philosophical lens. Through group discussions, we explored how art can empower individuality. Drawing on the Marxist humanist approach, we shift focus from art expectations to art as a liberating experience. Much of this session focused on the panelists’ examples and experiences in their own art and how we could duplicate this model to transform the world for future generations.