



St. Helens Public Library
Semiannual Report to City Council
August 3, 2022

January through July 2022 has been an unusual six months, even by pandemic standards. This has given us the opportunity to really feature the Makerspace and our Summer Library Challenge. Library staff have worked hard to maintain our high standards of service to the public and the public has demonstrated their ardent support of the library. Due to major staffing changes, much of our regular programming schedule is on hiatus. Here are some highlights of our service to the community from the past six months.

Fine Free!

On May 18, the library went fine free. Approved by City Council, this has made it possible for those patrons who couldn't afford to pay their fines to return. A public library's mission is to serve all our citizens and going fine free makes it possible for our patrons to borrow books, DVDs, Library of Things items such as a telescope, and use our online services and resources to help them acquire a certificate in a new field, do research for their homework or trace their family history.

Makerspace

"It's a wonderful opportunity for people to explore, learn to become creative and have a creative outlet, but also to build skills." – Rep. Suzanne Bonamici about the Makerspace

The library Makerspace continues to draw keen interest. No library card is needed to use the space and equipment to work with Allen Hansen on a personal or business project, take a class or learn a new skill. Examples include a group of homeschool families bringing their "Camp COVID" kids to try out robotics, a class for adults making survival bracelets, and a business owner designing their logo. Allen will soon be presenting one class a week, while continue to offer open hours and take appointments for individual and group activities. In addition to other community outreach, he is teaching a course at OMIC. We continue the search for funding that will allow us to support Allen's position and keep the Makerspace open.

Funding for Youth Librarian

“ . . . youth programs are vital to our most vulnerable populations living at or below the poverty line.” – library patron

An outpouring of community support for the Youth Librarian helped provide the impetus for the Budget Committee to recommend that the position stay in the FY 2023 library budget. The Council and committee received 32 written comments and 11 people testified before the Budget Committee.

Summer Library Challenge

The library is hosting its annual Summer Library Challenge, which offers a variety of incentives for children, teens and adults. Since June 20, 2022, 200 children (aged birth through 11), 47 teens (aged 12 to 18) and 60 adults (18 and over) have registered and logged 63,168 minutes read, as well as completing activities that got them reading, learning, making and helping in the community. Prizes include free books, a variety of small prizes for children who “spin the wheel,” a Bluetooth speaker for teens, and numerous gift cards from local restaurants for adults. We have seen an uptick in library visitors, much of which can be attributed to in large part to this program.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of a healthy public library. Currently, we have 17 active volunteers who have logged 348 hours since January. They shelve items, repair books, prepare items for the circulation and perform a variety of other support tasks freeing library staff to provide more direct patron services.

Friends of the Library

The Friends continue to be active supporters of the library and provide valuable community outreach, including three Little Libraries at the St. Helens Marina, the Food Bank and Walnut Tree Park. Their May 6 - 7 book sale netted \$660 to support library programs and other needs.

Library Board

In July, the Library Board welcomed two new members: Lynne Pettit and Aaron Martin and bid a fond farewell to board members Becky Bean and Amanda Heynemann. The Board played an active role in advocating for the retention of the Youth Librarian, among other library support.

Items added to the Collections

1,671 items including books, DVDs and CDs (January 1 through July 18, 2022)

The 17 new Wi-Fi hotspots, part of the Library of Things collection, are almost always checked out, demonstrating the continued need for this support in the community.

Library Cardholders

- St. Helens : 1,437
- Passports : 302
- Non-residents : 312
- Businesses : 5

Looking Ahead

- Hire Youth Librarian
- Complete Five-Year Plan
- Secure permanent funding for Allen Hansen's position
- Return to youth and other in-person programming
- 2023 Genealogy Conference

Submitted by Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
August 3, 2022