

# Bridges Library System Staff Reports

## May 2026

### Brittany Larson – Library System Director

**Quarterly Check-Ins:** In April/May I held quarterly check-ins with Bridges staff to discuss goals, how things are going, and the start of strategic planning and the 2027 budget process.

**Budget 2027:** I have begun the 2027 budget planning process with Bridges staff. We held a mini-strategic planning session on May 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss trends, needs, and the library landscape.

**Adjacent County Reimbursements:** Adjacent county reimbursement requests continue to flow in from different counties. I am verifying these requests and inputting them to submit to Waukesha County and Jefferson County for their 2027 budget processes. The statutory deadline is July 1<sup>st</sup>. If a library hasn't yet made their requests, this is a reminder that the deadline is approaching. Having the requests filed early is helpful as budget processes are starting.

**Waukesha County Minimum to Exempt Standards (2026 Process):** The annual library minimum to exempt standards calculations were sent to Waukesha County libraries on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Using information from each library's 2025 annual report, an overview is provided to library boards related to their specific minimum to exempt requirements. The requirements are based on the current 2022-2026 plan approved by the Waukesha County Board. Each library board must certify they will meet their requirements in 2026 as a part of the Waukesha County library tax exemption process. The certification is due back to the library system by August 31<sup>st</sup>. These minimum to exempt standards are an additional requirement in Waukesha County only. Details for the 2022-2026 plan can be found [here](#).

**Mobile App RFP:** The Mobile App committee has been meeting. I will attend the vendor interviews on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Waukesha County Act 150 Process:** The proposed 2027-2031 Waukesha County Services Plan was submitted to the County and has been placed on the County's Executive Committee and Finance Committee agendas and is prepared to go on the County Board's agenda in May.

**Continuing Education:** I attended the Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries (WAPL) Conference April 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, as well as a System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin (SRLAW) meeting. On May 4<sup>th</sup> I attended a webinar on Memory Cafes held by WLA's Outreach Services Roundtable. On May 6<sup>th</sup> I attended a de-escalation training facilitated by NAMI and held at the New Berlin Public Library.

**Library Visits:** I visited the Johnson Creek Public Library on April 13<sup>th</sup> to facilitate a communication training for their staff inservice. I visited the Menomonee Falls Public Library on April 15<sup>th</sup> to present to their library board. I visited the Powers Memorial Library (Palmyra) on April 24<sup>th</sup> to tour the building with the State Librarian.

## Kelly Nelson – Coordinator of Library Development

**Library Visits** – In April, I visited the Hartland Public Library to share what I do and learn a little more about the library.

### **Access For All: A Day of Learning**

Angela Meyers and I recently collaborated with Journey21 in Oconomowoc to provide a full day of learning for library staff focused on serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Journey21 is an organization dedicated to providing education, employment skill development, and social opportunities for this population. The event was held at Journey21 and featured sessions on understanding IDD, the library's role in serving this community, addressing challenging behaviors, highlighting programs libraries are already offering, and brainstorming future initiatives.



*Journey21 staff members, Dr. Sarah Scherwinski and Heidi Hamilton, led library staff in an engaging discussion on challenging behaviors they might face when working in a library.*

Staff left with a stronger understanding of this underserved population and new ideas for expanding library programming to better serve them.

**SEWI All Ages Programming Meet-ups** – I held two SEWI-wide programming meetups in April, focusing on All Ages and Intergenerational Programming. This is a topic that I was inspired to talk about after seeing a similar learning session at last fall's WLA conference. Meetups were held at the Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson and Cedarburg Public Library. 29 library staff members serving a variety of ages attended the meetups and came away with many new ideas.

**PLA Conference** – I was able to attend the Public Library Association Conference held in Minneapolis at the beginning of April. This was my first time attending a national conference and I was blown away by the number of exciting learning sessions. I was able to attend sessions in a variety of areas from staff culture and management to programming for older adults and adults with IDD, to the library's role in artificial intelligence. I'm looking forward to bringing some of these topics to our libraries.

### **Upcoming 2026 Events**

- [SEWI Libraries De-Escalation Skills Workshop](#) – Presented by NAMI Southeast Wisconsin, May 21, 1:30-3:30 pm, Mukwonago Community Library
- [WI Library Buildings & Spaces Webinar](#) – New Libraries, Shared Spaces: Developing Mixed-Use Library Facilities, May 28, 2–3 pm

## **Professional Development**

- Navigating Disability in the Workplace: Autism Focus – Webinar from Department of Workforce Development

## **Angela Meyers – Coordinator of Youth and Inclusive Services**

### **Youth Services**

- Coordinated and facilitated a Teen Think Tank meeting at Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson, bringing together staff from eight libraries.
- Supported member libraries in preparation for the 2026 Summer Library Program by conducting outreach to businesses and community organizations to secure prize incentives for participating youth. This year, I obtained four new sponsors, including three in Jefferson County and one in Waukesha County.
- Met with two youth services staff members this month, including a newly hired full-time youth services librarian, and conducted a check-in with another library as part of my 2026 goals.

### **Inclusive Services**

- The Library Memory Project was featured on What's on Tap with Sandy Maxx.
- Participated as a panelist in a Wisconsin Library Association Outreach Services Roundtable webinar on memory cafes.
- Participated in a Waukesha County Technical College Career Readiness Advisory Board meeting with GED/HSED providers and partner agencies serving the Waukesha County Jail. Bridges Library System was recognized for providing recreational reading materials to the jail population.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Spring Family Day will be offered through the Library Memory Project at Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson on Sunday, May 17, 2026. This partnership event includes Jefferson County libraries and the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Jefferson County.

## **Professional Development**

Completed KnowBe4: Quarter 2 security training; attended the Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries (WAPL) Conference; and participated in Rolling with Change in the Workplace (Waukesha County's Standards of Service Excellence certificate program)

## Emily Heller – Public Communications Coordinator

### Tracks in the Stacks Bigfoot Hunt

I'm thrilled to have all 24 member libraries joining the hunt! All materials have been ordered and will be put into delivery next week. The event will run Monday, June 1 – Friday, August 21, 2026. Participants will learn something unique about the library they are visiting when they locate the bigfoot and read the poster. Get the details: <https://bridgeslibrarysystem.org/bigfoot/>



### Web Accessibility Project

Good news! There has been an extension of the accessibility compliance dates from the Department of Justice.

- Population 50,000+ was extended to April 26, 2027
- Population less than 50,000 was extended to April 26, 2028

Even with the extension, I encouraged libraries to continue with their edits and remediations.

### Spring Marketing Meetup

I will be hosting a Virtual Marketing Meetup on May 20 to talk about digital accessibility for social media platforms best practices.

### Earth Day Celebration Outreach

I attended the Earth Day Celebration event at Retzer Nature Center on Saturday, April 25. We spoke to about 50 people and had an interactive photo station that families enjoyed. Nearly every visitor to our table was a patron of a Bridges member library!

I also connected with the Waukesha County Green Team about solar power presentations for libraries and patrons.



### Summer Library Program

Bridges Summer Library Program webpage has the schedule of all the performers being sponsored by Bridges for reference by patrons and staff again. It has been set-up as an accessible document on the webpage. I am also working on creating and scheduling sponsor thank you social media posts.

### In the news:

- Journey21 partners with Oconomowoc library to offer social events: [Freeman Article](#)
- Angela Meyers talks Memory Cafes with Sandy Maxx on 620 AM: [YouTube Podcast Link](#)

### [News Archives](#)

**Newsletter Data:** Industry standard/goal is 44% Open Rate

- Marketing Magic:
  - May 1: 56.47% Open Rate

- April 17: 67.06% Open Rate
  - April 3: 55.29% Open Rate
- Monthly Bridges:
  - April: 45.14% Open Rate
  - March: 44.54% Open Rate
- Monthly Legislators:
  - April: Legislators – 33.33% Open Rate / Staff – 50% Open Rate
  - March: Legislators – 5.56% Open Rate / Staff – 38.46% Open Rate