

2023 - 2024

LIBRARY
PERSONNEL
ANNUAL REPORT



THOMASTON
PUBLIC LIBRARY

CONTACT US

(207) 354-2453
thomaston.lib.me.us
library@thomastonmaine.gov

LIBRARY STAFF

Caroline Ward-Nesbit
Melissa Harjula
Toby Mergendahl
Caitlin Theroux
Blake Donaldson
Janet Dwelley
Janet Clark

40 DAYS OF SUMMER STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

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Ava Pratt
Maddie Brown
Dannaleigh Walsh
Autumn Hill
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Addie Usher

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It has been a remarkable year for us here at Thomaston Public Library, and I am very proud of the work we have done, the community partnerships we made, the collection we are always building, and what we have in store for the future. As Head Librarian, it is my privilege to be able to share a snapshot of all of that with you.

In April 2023, with the help of Quixada Moore-Vissing of Public Engagement Partners and a group of wonderful volunteers, we embarked on a strategic planning process to assess the needs of both the community and the Library in the next five years, and the direction the Library can take to best fulfill those needs. This process infused our staff and volunteers with a lot of energy and ideas, which led to the launch of so many new programs and collaborations with other community organizations.

In September, we were thrilled to add our longtime 40 Days of Summer staffer Toby Mergendahl to our year-round team as our youth programming librarian. The first program he initiated was a twice-weekly free afterschool program with snacks, games, homework help, and crafts, and it has been going very well with a great group of kids attending regularly. We hope to begin offering it for more days per week next fiscal year.

We partnered with Knox Clinic to offer a bi-monthly Trivia Night with free food, childcare, and prizes. Our first event in November 2023 was so successful we ran out of room and had to plan the next one to be in the Academy's gym. Thank goodness we did – it was a roaring success with nearly 70 people in attendance!

We have continued collaborating with our neighbors at the Cushing Library to offer a series of presentations, performances, and author talks, and have a full slate for 2024 that started in February with the very entertaining but informative maritime author and historian James L. Nelson with the story of Maine's first ship, Virginia. Future presenters on the schedule include pilot and author Mary S. Build, author Jane Sloven, children's author Liza Gardner Walsh, and musician Marc Black.

Together with Healthy Kids, we also now offer a weekly playgroup for infants to five-year-olds and their caregivers, which has been a welcome opportunity for many young families in the area to connect.

Finally, our latest new program is a prose writing group organized by Kendray Rodriguez. Meeting twice a month, this group welcomes prose writers of all experience levels and genres to share their work, receive constructive feedback, and hone their craft in a supportive environment.

Of course, we have also continued offering established favorites such as story time, Crafters' Club, Family Movie & Pizza Night, multiple book groups, Poets' Corner, Communi-TEA, our beloved 40 Days of Summer lunch and activities program (going into our 11th year!), and the twice-weekly Senior Exercise Class co-sponsored by the Thomaston Rec Department.

In October 2023, during Together with Thomaston and with a fantastic team of energetic volunteers, we launched a massive reorganization of our children's collection to make it easier to browse, and while that is still in progress, the feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

We are also grateful to have been the recipient this year of several significant grants, and we are excited to embark on the projects they will fund. The first is a \$20,000 grant from the American Library Association's initiative Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities to improve accessibility in the Library for patrons with physical disabilities and mobility issues. We also received a \$7,000 grant from the Maine Department of Community and Economic Development and the Maine State Library to adapt our Community Conference Room to a co-working space. Finally, we are thankful to once again be awarded a \$1,800 grant from the Anonimo Foundation to offer take-home projects for kids.

As always, we wouldn't be able to do all of this wonderful work without the support of the amazing community we are so privileged to be a part of.

With thanks,
Caroline Ward-Nesbit
Head Librarian

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