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KCLS STORIES  
OF 2018



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## AUTHOR JAMIE FORD: A STELLAR STORYTELLER ON PAPER AND IN PERSON

Jamie Ford is many things. He is a best-selling author of historical fiction; an exhaustive researcher intrigued by Seattle's history; and a busy parent juggling book tours and raising seven kids. King County Library System patrons will tell you he is also a stellar speaker.

The author of *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter Sweet*, *Songs of Willow Frost* and *Love and Other Consolation Prizes*, spoke at an event at Renton's Carco Theater on March 8 as part of **Everyone's Talking About It**, KCLS' adult education program series. Sponsored by the King County Library System Foundation, the event drew 150 people. Ford was clearly surprised by the turnout.

"This is REALLY cool!" he said, stepping to the podium and looking out at the crowd.

Self-effacing and full of humor, Ford endeared himself even more to audience members already enamored by his novels. He discussed his process as a writer and historical researcher, the importance of readers and libraries, and regaled patrons with personal stories.

"I could listen to him for hours," said L. Jochim. Like others who attended the event, she came because of his love for Ford's books. Many brought their own copies or purchased books for Ford to sign post-lecture.

The audience applauded enthusiastically when Ford revealed that he has sold the film rights for his debut novel, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*. Although clearly thrilled, he expressed some trepidation.

"They (Hollywood) could really butcher it," he joked.

The book was also optioned for a musical stage play. "I'm a total geek for musicals, so I'm excited."

Discussing the ironies of success, Ford talked about tweets

he has received from disgruntled high-school students for whom *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* was required summer reading.

"My own kids had to read it. It's not cool when dad is homework," Ford laughed.

Since the book is not available on SparkNotes™ (book summaries), kids who procrastinated were desperate.

"One student tweeted that he'd be 'willing to pay cash' to anyone who could provide a synopsis of the book," Ford laughed. "Another emailed me directly, asking me to explain 'Motel on the Corner of Sweet and Sour.' "

It was particularly heart-warming to receive an email from a male student who said of *Hotel*, "This is the first time I was forced to read a book that I actually loved."

Ford answered questions from the audience, and even took a photo of an audience member's heirloom scrapbook of the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exhibition, the historical backdrop of *Love and Other Consolation Prizes*.

"It was wonderful that the library offered this," said L. Fox, who shared the family scrapbook with Ford. "I grew up in Seattle so I could relate to the names and places in the book. The way he created empathy and understanding for the main characters—as a reader, you can put yourself in their positions."

People came with their friends, relatives and book clubs. Ford's acquaintances from the Wing Luke Museum, where he is a board member, also attended.

As an aspiring writer, L. Jochim said she had to come.

"I just finished *Love and Other Consolation Prizes*," she said. "It was great for me to hear him talk about his own writing, getting inside his mind, how he chooses a theme, how he starts his process. It's really very important for inspiring readers and other writers."

L. Fox summed it up best: "Events like this offered by KCLS are really valuable. They open up new pathways to thinking."



## CAREGIVERS GAIN KNOWLEDGE, INSPIRATION AND SUPPORT AT KCLS AUTHOR EVENT

Getting older can mean different things to different people. For those caring for elderly loved ones, passing years can create extra burdens.

Joy Loverde, author of *Who Will Take Care of Me When I'm Old?* gave both a reality check and a hopeful message to caregivers at a special event at the Renton Library on April 18. Loverde, also the author of *The Complete Eldercare Planner*, drew a capacity crowd of 50 patrons.

"What are we supposed to do with all this aging?" she asked the mostly female crowd. "Are you holding yourself back about what's next? Ask yourself, who am I now? And who will be there for me?"

Loverde said cultural attitudes toward aging must change; demographics show increased numbers of aging baby boomers—and increased longevity.

"Nobody talks about the elephant in the room," she said. "There is a world-wide caregiver shortage."

KCLS has increased its programming for people ages 50 and older to help connect patrons to information and community resources to ease life's challenges. Patrons praised the library for addressing issues of aging and caregiving and for being a trusted source of information about this important topic.

For the past 30 years, Loverde has researched the elderly to determine their greatest needs, problems and "what they hold most dearly." She cited 90-year-olds caught off guard by living so long, who tell her, "I don't know why I'm still here."

In addition to issues of memory, mobility and feelings of loneliness and isolation, the elderly worry about running out of money, she said. They express that "they want to be needed by somebody for something," and are "overwhelmed by stuff" accumulated over the years. Caregivers are overwhelmed by responding to daily needs and handling a spectrum of chores from paperwork and meals to bath times and doctor visits.

Program attendees said they gained critical knowledge about how to better care for friends and family members, as well as themselves.

N. Mendez, tears in her eyes, said she is caregiving both of her parents and is "chronically exhausted."

"I was having a hard time today. I struggle with it all," she said. "I'm very thankful to KCLS for this support. The speaker was very good, very helpful, and made me think about how to get more help both for my parents and myself."

M. Koontz said she operates an adult family home and took care of her husband for more than 20 years.

"I was very impressed with this library program and the speaker; she is right on with her knowledge of what caregivers go through," Koontz said. "It was very worthwhile!"

Others said they were inspired by Loverde's hopeful solutions, such as increasing social contact and sharing not only information, but also living spaces.

"We've read her book and our plan is to form an adult family home; there are six in our family," D. Burris said. "Our mother took care of my dad and he got to be with us the whole time. We realize we'll have to cost-share, but that there are ways that we can take care of each other."

KCLS is committed to helping others as well, by continuing to provide educational programs, resources and inspiration for King County's aging population and the families and caregivers on the front lines of support.



## COMMUNITY COURT HELPS BUILD LIVES AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

She was caught shoplifting toilet paper and vegetables.

Rather than appearing before a judge in criminal court, the single mother of two teens was given a hopeful alternative: Community Court at the Redmond Library.

Community Court, a partnership between King County Library System, King County District Court and the City of Redmond, is part of a growing international trend called restorative justice. According to the Center for Court Innovation in New York City, the tough-but-compassionate approach aims to address underlying issues of criminal behavior to prevent people from cycling in and out of the justice system. Community Courts offer low-level, non-violent offenders the chance to avoid jail in exchange for completing community service and individualized legal plans that may include mental health and substance abuse assessments and treatment. The courts also save taxpayers money.

A grand-opening celebration was held August 1 after a four-month pilot program proved successful in steering participants onto roads of recovery and newfound purpose. As part of the program, the Library also hosts a Community Resource Center (CRC) that is open to both court participants and the public. The CRC connects visitors with representatives from community organizations that provide diverse legal and wellness services, such as housing, behavioral health, and dispute resolution.

The single mom, K. Wight, was among those who graduated from Community Court that day, proud of her “diploma” and of finding a job she loves. By complying with all court requirements, Wight and other graduates had their cases dismissed and removed from their records, with the welcome opportunity to start life anew.

“I’m done!” Wight said, ecstatic after receiving her order of dismissal from Judge Lisa Paglisotti. “I shoplifted because I was in a position of feast or famine, but I’m not proud of it. When I first came to court, I was not happy. Nevertheless, people were great; they connect you with mental health and other services, they walk you through what you need to do. It was all really worth it.”

Wight added that holding Community Court at a library is “way less intimidating” than attending a formal courtroom. “I’ve seen people’s self-esteem go from down on the floor to way up,” Judge Paglisotti said. “Some of individuals have never had positive reinforcement in their entire lives. When you’re overwhelmed, it is hard to move forward.”

Judge Paglisotti and others say the Community Resource Center is key to Community Court. Having on-site access to food, housing and employment assistance; substance abuse and mental-health counseling, and other services, makes a huge difference in the ultimate success of court participants. Access to library computers and information services is also key.

"We know that a big part of why people don't reach out for and receive services is because they cannot get to the offices," said Ericka Cooley, Community Court Coordinator for King County District Court. "The Resource Center puts the agencies together so the clients can ask questions and begin getting help from multiple agencies in one day and in one place."

KCLS is committed to strengthening community connections, and Community Court is having ripple effects beyond helping participants, court

officials say. The community service requirement creates interactions between court participants and local residents. Local seniors serve as program volunteers. Several court graduates who were once homeless often return to help court participants who are currently homeless.

"Community Court is connecting people in ways that reduce 'us and them' thinking," Paglisotti said. "It is providing a pathway to dignity."



## EDITH + EDDIE: DOCUMENTARY SPARKS A CONVERSATION ABOUT CARING FOR THE ELDERLY

In 2014, Eddie Harrison and Edith Hill both won the lottery. When Eddie, who is white, met Edith, who is black, they were captivated by each other's kindness.

They fell in love and got married. Eddie was 95 and Edith 96.

King County Library System (KCLS) patrons had an opportunity to learn about America's oldest interracial couple at a screening of the documentary *Edith + Eddie* at Renton Highlands Library on March 14. In the film, the two dance, hold hands, sing together in church, converse respectfully and fight for the right to stay together.

The poignant film drew laughter, tears and outrage from the audience. A discussion afterwards revealed that most were not concerned about the racial aspect of the story, but rather how family dynamics, questionable legal intervention and what some viewed as elder abuse and a miscarriage of justice ended a couple's loving relationship.

Directed by Laura Checkoway, *Edith + Eddie* was presented as part of KCLS' **Everyone's Talking About It** adult program series. The film was nominated for a 2018 Academy Award as Best Short Documentary.

Touched by a news story about the couple, singer and Oscar-winning actor Cher, age 71, signed on as executive producer. She was well aware of aging issues after caregiving her own mother and grandmothers. She joined Thomas Lee Wright, author of *The Family Guide to Preventing Elder Abuse* to produce the film.

When Edith is diagnosed with mild dementia, a feud erupts between her two children. One daughter, Rebecca, fights to keep Edith and Eddie together in Edith's home. The other, Patricia, lives in Florida and wants Edith to live in a nearby nursing home. Edith does not want to leave Eddie or move closer to Patricia or her husband, whom she calls "abusive." Rebecca believes her sister wants to sell their mother's house for the money.

When the sisters cannot agree, the court appoints a legal guardian. Although she has never met Edith or Eddie, the guardian sides with Patricia and promptly takes the elderly woman to Florida. The guardian characterizes the move as "a little vacation," and promises Eddie that he will be able to talk to Edith every day. However, he is never able to reach her.

"I believe Eddie gave up hope when he realized my mother wasn't going to come back," Rebecca says, after he dies of a heart attack.

Patrons were visibly moved by the film, and grateful to KCLS for a chance to view a thought-provoking film that had limited theater distribution. They also felt "wrung out" and angry over the couple's fate.

"It was heart-breaking for me because I can relate," said one woman, who revealed that she is fighting a similar battle with her own family over her father's care. "The guardian was outrageous. She didn't listen at all to what Edith and Eddie wanted, and it seemed like there was no investigation of abuse."



She also considered the film a cautionary tale and a reminder of the importance of proactive elder planning.

"It makes you realize: don't wait until people are screaming at one another," she said.

E. McAdoo said, "I feel like the film had nothing really to do with race; it's about elder rights and how the elderly in this country are dismissed. When my mom had a stroke, she was not able to walk. The doctor told me, 'Well, she's 79.' The whole thing was, 'she's old.'"

"It's appalling," said I. Monson. "I don't understand how a guardian can have so much power."

Cher had similar sentiments. In an interview with the Hollywood Reporter, she said that making *Edith + Eddie* was the only thing that "stopped my heart from breaking completely.

"I thought, 'people will be able to see their beautiful story and then how they had no control over their lives.' They were not treated like people. They weren't treated with the respect that age demands."

Patrons agreed. As Monson said, "It's not the way I want to be treated."



## FEDERAL WAY LIBRARY BUILDS CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VETERANS AND THE COMMUNITY

KCLS is constantly looking at ways to best serve its patrons, making everyone feel welcome and included.

Therefore, when a recent community-discovery process revealed that a large majority of South King County residents are military veterans, Federal Way Adult Services Librarian Edna Bastien-Wennerlind reached out to the local post of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) to increase programming for vets.



“Many veterans don’t like to draw attention to themselves,” said Bastien-Wennerlind. “They are a demographic that is significantly underserved. Yet they enjoy getting out and being around people, especially other vets. And some may not know that the VFW meets regularly at the library to assist fellow veterans seeking resources.”

As part of National Military Appreciation Month in May, Bastien-Wennerlind worked with VFW Post 2886 to plan four programs at the Federal Way Library. Each focused on American history—particularly the Vietnam era—to build connections between veterans and promote greater public understanding of their service to the country.

On May 5, the library hosted Loyalty Day, where vets posed for photos with patrons and explained the history behind an impressive array of American flags on display. Many attendees were unaware that the U.S. flag has been modified 26 times since 1777. The current 50-star design is the 27<sup>th</sup> iteration, and was officially adopted after Hawaii became the 50<sup>th</sup> state in 1959. The program also included a demonstration on how to properly fold the flag.

A screening of the PBS documentary *Peace Meals* was held on May 12 to build greater understanding. In the film, an American veteran and a Vietnamese veteran are brought together for a meal and conversation. They also talk with young people who are several generations removed from the war.

On May 23, the library again teamed with KBTC (the local PBS television station) to screen another Vietnam-era film, *America’s Secret War*, followed by an engaging discussion among those attending, including vets and civilians.

On the afternoon of May 30, veterans joined patrons of all ages to build, paint and decorate model military airplanes made from kits provided by the VFW. The balsa wood planes were embellished with red, white and blue flags, military insignias and other decals. Several kids applied glitter,

rainbows and flowers to signify peace. Veterans answered questions about their military service.

"How many wars were you in?" J. Harrison, 16, asked veteran B. Swift.

"Just one," responded Swift, a U.S. Navy fighter pilot. "Vietnam."

"Thank you," said Harrison, nodding respectfully.

Dick Whipple, another U.S. Navy fighter pilot who also served in Vietnam, said he and his fellow vets enjoy engaging in the model airplane activity.

"We don't discuss politics or religion, but we feel kids can benefit from learning about patriotism and the freedoms Americans have because of men and women willing to sacrifice."

Attendees were clearly inspired by the veterans' stories.

"They are so honorable," said one mother, who decorated planes with her son.

"Vets have served. They have wisdom and deserve our respect and gratitude."

Many of the veterans said that being acknowledged goes a long way toward healing.

"That's real nice, when people thank you for your service," said C. Cummins, who spent four years in the Marines and was injured in combat right before his tour of duty ended in 1971.

Army veteran Karl Rone, who moderated the film events, commended the library's outreach.

"Bringing groups of people together and learning through story-telling and deep reflection created a warm learning environment," Rone said. "The audience was able to express its emotions on the subject, while witnessing the emotions of others. I hope to be part of many more events like this."

S. Lin attended the model airplane activity with her nine-year-old daughter. She praised KCLS for offering the multi-generational program.

Echoing the other vets, Whipple said,

"I felt that all the programs that we did with the library were fantastic. We need to do more of them in all the libraries!"



## FOR BETTY GREEN, BEING A FRIEND OF THE LIBRARY IS A FAMILY AFFAIR

Betty Green is supervising the annual Bothell Library Book Sale, smiling as patrons crowd around tables stacked with books.

One patron scoops up books on travel, another on art, while another grabs cookbooks. Several women debate over gardening tomes, while two teens gravitate toward science books. One mom approves her child's choice of books on animals, while another approves a number of DVDs.

By the end of the sale, the Bothell Friends President, is really smiling. So are her daughter, Laurie Edwards, and granddaughter, Nicky Edwards. The three generations of Bothell Friends have volunteered at the library—and coordinated the book sale—for years. This sale raised \$3,093.75, to be donated to library programs and services.

"KCLS is definitely in our blood," Green said of volunteerism that includes husbands and siblings. "Our whole family loves the library, we love the books. It's all a labor of love."

The King County Library System could not do without its Friends, those avid volunteers who raise funds through book sales and advocate for their community libraries. In 2018, the total amount of fiscal support provided by Friends to KCLS programs and initiatives was \$311,842, helping to provide speakers and fund programs of local interest.

Friends also help build a stronger sense of community, bringing neighbors together for a broad spectrum of services and activities.

In October, the KCLS Foundation bestowed its annual Friends Awards when it held a 20th Anniversary celebration for all 40 Friends groups, hosting 127 volunteers.



Green was named Friend of the Year in 2001. Laurie, who started sorting books at age six, received the KCLS Friends Hall of Fame award in 2005. Nicky, age 24, is following in their footsteps as a Friends officer and organizer.

Green has been involved with Bothell Friends since 1963, advocating for various ballot measures, fundraising and recruiting volunteers. In 1969, local support led to a new 8,300-square-foot library, which was annexed to KCLS in 1986.

"The library became a home away from home, my respite," said Green, who has worked 120 book sales over the years—and only missed three.

In 1974, the families were among the supporters of a successful \$172 million KCLS Capital Bond measure. In 1995, a new 22,500 square foot Bothell Library opened. From 1992 to 2002, Green chaired the King County Book Sale and Laurie was Chief Financial Officer. Green also has kept an archive of Bothell's varied library history dating back to 1905, and credits Laurie with saving part of that history, an artwork now gracing the Bothell Library's meeting room wall.

"Volunteering and being part of KCLS is a major deal in our family; the library is part of the fabric of everything we do," Green said. "I'm really proud of what we've been able to accomplish to support libraries, but we also value the friendships we have made with other volunteers and KCLS staff. We all feel so lucky to have KCLS."

## GRAND OPENING OF THE BELLEVUE LIBRARY IDEAX MAKERSPACE DRAWS AN ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD

Saturday, April 14 marked a major milestone for the King County Library System with the grand opening of the highly anticipated Bellevue Library **ideaX Makerspace**, featuring an array of hands-on technology activities for patrons of all ages.

An estimated 900 people attended the event, which featured speeches by local dignitaries and a ribbon-cutting ceremony unveiling the new 3,000 square-foot space. There was something for everyone as kids, teens and adults donned Virtual Reality goggles, observed 3-D demonstrations, composed music with Ableton software, explored how to digitize photos and use programmable sewing machines, played with squishy circuits, and watched a robot solved a Rubik's Cube™.

With an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM), the space is designed to spark imagination, develop critical-

thinking skills, introduce emerging technologies, and bring people together to learn collaboratively.

KCLS Executive Director Lisa Rosenblum thanked the audience for turning out and the KCLS Foundation for helping to fund the Makerspace. She also acknowledged and thanked Google for providing a \$100,000 grant to support STEAM education.

"We are thrilled to reveal the new Makerspace to you," Rosenblum told the audience. "With ideaX, KCLS is taking innovation to the next level. The Makerspace is one of the ways in which KCLS is following through on our commitment to create opportunities through meaningful connections. We want the library to be a community gathering place that sparks imagination, and allows people of all ages to learn collaboratively, develop critical skills and to explore emerging technologies."



What began in 2015 as an innovative Mobile Services initiative to connect patrons with hands-on learning experiences emphasizing STEAM skills has evolved. In 2017, the Rotary Club of Bellevue gave a \$5,000 grant to support the design of the Makerspace, adding \$2,000 in 2018 for equipment, supplies and materials.

Further reinforcing the value of STEAM education, Boeing awarded KCLS an \$80,000 grant to create a second ideaX Makerspace at the Federal Way Library. A three-year, \$300,000 grant from the Moccasin Lake Foundation will support both Makerspaces and ideaX mobile service.

As Dorothy Nothnagle, head of Google External Affairs Northwest put it, "Google's mission is to organize information and make it accessible to everyone. Libraries are at the forefront of getting information to people, and STEAM education is incredibly important, particularly with so many tech jobs needing to be filled in the future."

The crowd applauded enthusiastically when keynote speaker and NASA astronaut Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger recalled how important science education was to her. A mission specialist on Space Shuttle Discovery's 2010 flight to the International Space Station, she extolled the learning opportunities the Makerspace offers, urging the audience to imagine new possibilities.

"Today we are launching into space—a Makerspace—which has the power to ignite our minds," she said. "We're not on a solid rocket booster, but Makerspace will definitely help us see the world in a different way. It will add to our digital literacy, and to our personal and collective knowledge."

The celebration also included remarks by Bellevue Mayor John Chelminiak; KCLS Trustee Robin McClelland; Teresa Byers, President of the KCLS Foundation Board of Directors; and Jennifer Stormont of The Miller Hull Partnership, the architectural firm that designed the space.

Attendees raved about Makerspace and the chance to check out "so many cool things."

"This is great for children, but I'm enjoying it too," said P. Gentzkow. "A lot of kids get technology support at home, but a lot don't. This makes it accessible to everyone and can get kids interested in science or technology for a career. And it's all fun!"

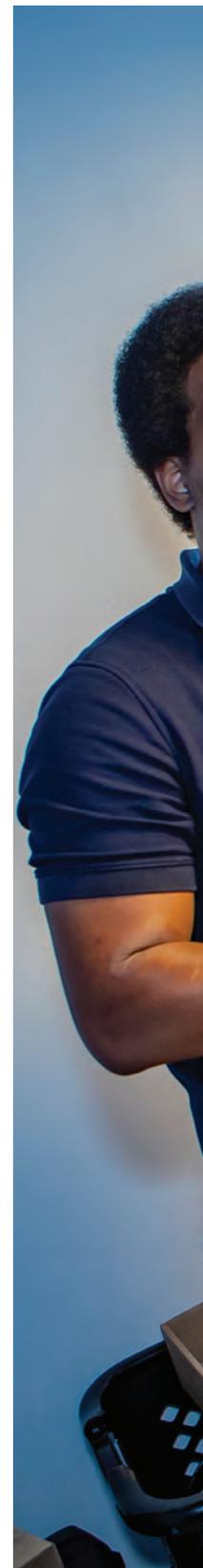
Patron T. Bone said she was not about to miss the ideaX grand opening. Her three children were particularly intrigued by the 3-D display, and the whole family, including grandparents, waited in line to experience Virtual Reality.

J. Kindsvater, a professional engineer, thanked a staff member for everything the space offers and then volunteered to be a Makerspace mentor.

S. Sedwin said she was inspired to check out ideaX after seeing an ad in her local community newspaper.

"It's absolutely about hands-on activities, cool things you can touch and all the tools to make things," she said. "I know my parents are working on digitizing photos so we'll definitely be back!"

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start something





## HARRY POTTER FANS AND WIZARDS CONVERGE ON COVINGTON LIBRARY

Autumn leaves swirled amid Northwest drizzle as 180 wizards, costumed in black capes, cloaks and “witching” hats filed into Covington Library to learn their destinies.

Which House would beckon them? Which wand would choose them? Which enchantment, charm, potion or conjuring classes should they take?

On September 15, KCLS librarians created a day of magic for fans of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series. In anticipation of the upcoming film sequel to Rowling’s *Imaginary Beasts and Where to Find Them*, the event also kicked off wizard-themed fall classes, such as Charm Your Yarn (knitting/crocheting); Witchy Stitchery (sewing); Conjuring Crystals; Celtic Knots; Bewitching Buttons; and Brewing (Lip) Balms. The workshops were held at Covington, Algona Pacific, Auburn, Black Diamond, Fairwood, Federal Way, Kent and Maple Valley libraries, where attendees could earn house points.

“The library is a naturally magical place,” Librarian Elenya Herring, who organized the event, told the crowd. “If you’ve ever been lost in a book, you know what I mean. This seemed like a perfect fit.”

Patrons agreed, commending KCLS for bringing book lovers and “magicians” together to share information and experiences.

Middle and high school students, along with parents and grandparents, patiently awaited their turns to be “sorted” into various schoolhouses. While Harry Potter attended the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in Scotland, the Covington staff designed their event around America’s version of Hogwarts—the Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Its four houses are named after make-believe beasts: Pukwudgie, Wampus, Horned Serpent and Thunderbird.

Herring and Librarians PhilisAnn Bodle and Tandra Solvey invited participants to walk around a table decorated with a gold chalice and symbolic



Hogwarts sorting hat. Circling slowly, they passed four avatars representing different beasts/houses and personality traits. The elaborate papier-mâché figures, hand-made by Herring, “selected” students with signals controlled remotely by librarians.

The first girl chosen was sorted into the Pukwudgie House when an arrow-holding arm moved up and down as she walked by. When the next boy walked past the Horned Serpent’s foot, it lit up—and so did the delighted boy. A hooded Wampum figure exhaled shadowy whispers to various students, while Thunderbird’s white feather waved for others. The ceremony took nearly two hours, with enthusiastic applause throughout.

“I love this! It’s magical, and I love magical, mystical things,” said 12-year-old H. Patterson, a Thunderbird. Her twin sister jumped up and down excitedly after being sorted into Pukwudgie, then high-fived her Pukwudgie-bound dad.

“Harry Potter came out when my husband and I were in college; we read all the books. I taught them as literature to our daughters,” said their mother, J. Patterson. “It’s so fun for them. They can be whatever they want to be and escape. With Harry Potter, everyone has a community and you can geek out with friends.”

A thrilled I. Sielaff, wand in hand, ran to his mother after becoming a Horned Serpent.

“He is an avid reader and we love the library,” said his mother, A. Sielaff. She added that for his 10th birthday, she bought him the entire Harry Potter series, which he read in 10 days.

N. Brunofski, age 11, grinned at her mom as she joined the Horned Serpents.

“The wizarding world is huge—and educational,” said K. Brunofski. “It really bridges all ages and unites people with a common interest. You get to step outside of reality to be part of a fantastical world. There is an innocence to it, and it allows for self-reflection.

“It is awesome that KCLS is doing this and making connections with Harry Potter fans,” she said. “I think the whole wizarding world brings out the best in people.”



## KCLS STAFF DRAW IDEAS AND INSPIRATION AT 'GAME CHANGERS'

On May 9, King County Library System children's, teen and adult librarians gathered at the Service Center in Issaquah for the third annual **Game Changers** workshop to share ideas and draw inspiration from some of KCLS' most innovative, staff-driven programming.

KCLS Executive Director Lisa Rosenblum welcomed 79 staff from across the System, praising them for developing programs that creatively address community needs.

"Design-thinking involves listening and that's what you are—design thinkers," said Rosenblum. "You know how best to do your job; my job is to listen to you and let you try, learn and move forward. My philosophy is 'No harm, no foul.'"

Older Adult Services Coordinator Wendy Pender served as moderator for the event. She said that Game Changer programs are building connections between people of all ages.

"Things really are changing for the positive, and I really appreciate all the hard work people have done," Pender said. "The Game Changers event is designed for networking and making meaningful connections. Developing programs really does take a village."

The event featured panel discussions on Book Love, Building Community, Community Partnerships, Diversity, Large-Scale

Panelists Anna Malesa and Michelle McLaughlin kicked off the day with a presentation on Teen Summer Camp, a weeklong event at Steel Lake featuring entertainment, summer meals, the Library2Go! bookmobile, a book giveaway and

prizes provided by community partners in Federal Way. Nearly 75 teens enjoyed reading, outdoor activities and events ranging from a Hip-Hop challenge to workshops on anti-bullying and positive relationships. The Summer Camp was a powerful way of providing free youth engagement opportunities that have been lacking in the community. "It was just awesome seeing all the kids and connections that were made," McLaughlin said.

Rachel McDonald and Jennifer Wooten said Teen Voices was a program developed by and for teens. The one-time project, funded by a \$10,000 grant from the KCLS Foundation, involved teens in four communities who planned and hosted summits on topics of interest. Redmond teens discussed immigration, mental health and "breaking the gender binary;" Tukwila teens tackled racial equity in schools; Renton teens took on anti-bullying; and Maple Valley teens focused on life skills.

Newport Way Maker Day drew more than 3,000 people who painted, tested robotics, and made everything from instruments to Korean lanterns. The purpose of the event, said organizer Kirsten Corning was "to promote access to information to the entire community, regardless of age, race or socio-economic status in a hands-on manner that many people enjoy." She added, "There was so much energy! Even knitting was crazy popular!"

Diversity panelists Stephanie Zero and Carrie Bowman, respectively, talked about Redmond's "Around the World" program and Mercer Island's "Conversations for Strong Communities" which focused on building relationships and understanding among different ethnic groups.

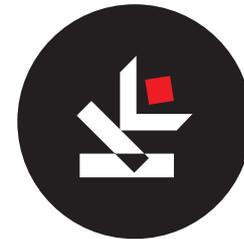
Jessica McClinton Lopez highlighted Issaquah's Reading Rockets program, which creates book buddies by pairing high-school students with underserved kids who typically face barriers to accessing library programs and services.

Panels on intergenerational programming featured Maggie Wong (Energize your Friends of the Library), Maggie Block (All-Game Day at Skyway) and Rochelle Brown (Teens Teach STEM). Wong urged staff to boost Friends memberships by including teens as "full-standing" Friends to provide intergenerational volunteer support for libraries. At Skyway, games included board, dice and role-playing (kids in one area, teens in another). Local gaming stores brought in games and instructors. Brown said that Teens Teach STEM was organized by enthusiastic high-school students in local robotics, rocketry and other clubs. "There was a demand in the (Newport) community for more STEM; it was really about the things the kids said they wanted to do. And they wanted to put it on their resumes."

Several unique programs were presented during an afternoon session on Book Love. Donna Day's "Rap Battle of the Books" had colleagues rocking out to Ludacris' rendition of "Llama Llama Red Pajama." Brooke Shoostine discussed Fandom Forward, an offshoot of the Harry Potter Alliance, which helps fans bring activism to their fandom by providing toolkits focused on issues such as climate change and youth homelessness. Kendra Wright talked about a reading incentive program called Spoilers! Kids make up alternative endings to the books they read. If they fool the librarian into thinking the story ends differently than it actually does, they win a prize!

Building Community panelists included Jenna Zarzycki (Library Trivia), Elenya Herring (Help You/Help Out) and Kirsten Edwards (Murder Mystery). Community Partnerships panelists featured Jeong Kim and Andy Wickens (World Relief), Linda Ernst (Facebook Live) and LeGrand Olsen (Startup 425).

While some programs might require funding to replicate, staff was pleased to learn that most do not. Many in the audience expressed their hope to "keep the sharing going all year" and praised the panelists for innovative programming that tackled community issues and strengthened community engagement through the library.



CHANGERS

## KIDS LEARN LITERACY AND OTHER SKILLS WHILE PLAYING WITH WORDS AND MUSIC

How do you entertain a bunch of kids?

Ask the very versatile **Eric Ode**.

The popular songwriter, author and puppeteer wowed children, parents and grandparents alike when he presented a story and song show called **Alphabet Soup**. The April 24 event, held at Southcenter Mall's Sky Terrace, was part of KCLS' annual springtime series, **Playing with Words and Music**.

The series, held at various libraries, brings families together to learn literacy, experience the joy of language and to develop social skills that can lay the foundation for academic and workforce success. The Library System has long offered the program, which provides early childhood education, language and brain development combined with entertainment. Playing with Words and Music featured classes for all ages, from children's book readings to tween and teen workshops on stand-up comedy, art, cartooning and poetry.

"Let's do a story," Ode said, starting the Southcenter class by juggling tomatoes while reading his book, *Too Many Tomatoes*. Kids and adults sat on a colorful rug, applauding and laughing as Ode presented one crowd-pleasing act after another.

"Your job is to sing along now," he said, picking up his guitar to play the "Alphabet Song" ("Someone's on the stoop drinking alphabet soup"). The kids sang out letters of the alphabet and imitated animal sounds such as owls ("whoo! whoo!"), frogs ("ribbit, ribbit"), gleefully chirping like "crickets down in the thickets."

Ode made sure kids had plenty of chances to move to the music, too. They danced, jumped, spun around, sat down, jumped back up and even stopped on command during a Rock n' Roll number ("I put my fingers on my knees; now freeze!")



His ventriloquist act with a big barn-cat puppet had kids crooning “MeeeOWW” to help “make the tabby less crabby.” Kids listened carefully as Ode read his book *Dan the Taxi Man*, imitating the taxi’s horn (“beep beep!”) whenever they heard the driver’s name.

J. Williams was impressed with KCLS for offering programs featuring Ode; she was grateful for the delight he brought her children through his storytelling, movement and music.

“He (Ode) really knows how to deal with kids,” Williams said. “His stories are so interactive, the kids really get involved. He knows how they’ll react and keeps things moving.”

S. Clementson agreed. Her four-year-old daughter and two-year-old son were mesmerized, and she has seen their interest in language grow along with social skills.

“We’ve gone to a lot of library classes, and Eric is very professional and engaging,” Clementson said. “His guitar playing is awesome, and there were such a variety of activities. My kids loved the whole combination.”

E. Harvey praised the Library System for offering fun childhood education and literacy programs for even the youngest of kids. While his nine-month-old granddaughter kept crawling across the floor to make friends, she was also attentive, bobbing to music, clapping with others, interested in the puppets and musical instruments.

“I’ve noticed she’s becoming friendlier” by going to various library programs, Harvey said. “For her, it’s mainly about the other kids, although she really liked it when he juggled the tomatoes. And I figure, it’s never too early to start learning!”



## LET'S TALK: LIBRARIES BRING NEIGHBORS TOGETHER FOR FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATIONS

King County Library System patrons know they can head to any library for information and resources, or simply to read, study and develop individual knowledge.

Libraries also are places of powerful connections, where people of all ages and backgrounds come together to learn and share knowledge for a deeper sense of community and belonging.

Patrons who attended KCLS' community-building events said they valued and benefitted from the social interactions provided by a **CommuniTea** program at Maple Valley Library, **Challenging Conversations** at Mercer Island Library and **Wisdom Cafés** at multiple venues.

Whether meeting for fun or tackling topics such as **Dealing with Difficult People** and **Please Listen**, patrons said talking with others face-to-face made them feel less alone, and more understanding of others.

"This program is so very important, I think it should be expanded and offered in all libraries," said J. Malone, who attended the Challenging Conversations class taught by Marcia McReynolds, co-manager of the City of Bellevue's Neighbor Mediation Program.

"I learned never to give up on deepening one's relationship with others," Malone said.

Attendees at the event said McReynolds' experience and toolkit of communication skills were invaluable. The toolkit included body language, eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice and active listening. McReynolds demonstrated, for example, how conversation is affected when someone leans towards another person to show respect and

engagement, versus sitting back and crossing one's arms, often interpreted as disinterest or even hostility.

"The notion of civility—80 percent of people in a recent (City of Bellevue) survey said they wanted that," McReynolds said. "There is an art to having a difficult yet civil conversation, whether it's a conflict involving divorce, or with a neighbor, family member, colleague, landlord, tenant or others."

Patrons said that learning to communicate more effectively face-to-face, which involves both expressing oneself and listening attentively to others, is increasingly important in the Internet age. Many said positive human interactions help counter the cultural, political, religious, ethnic and gender polarization so often heightened by faceless and anonymous social media.

However, as McReynolds noted, it is not easy. She views "conflict as opportunity," but says anger is one of the biggest "speed bumps" to resolution, along with fear.

Class attendees nodded knowingly. One woman said she "comes from a family that stews. We don't talk; we hold grudges." Another said: "I have World War III going on in our house because of politics."

The CommuniTea program also brought people together, offering an open forum that allowed locals a chance to gather around a table, sipping tea and nibbling chocolate chip cookies while getting to know each other. Strangers turned into neighbors as they discussed whatever was on their minds, including such topics as aging, caregiving, intergenerational challenges, favorite movies, travel tips and the joys of Shakespeare.

After telling the group that her husband had recently died, M. Lange was befriended by other patrons. They not only sympathized with her, but offered tips on everything from hiking to inspirational books.

"I'm a connector-type person, so this was really helpful," Lange said. "Social media is okay but it can also make you feel lonely, seeing all the wonderful things other people are doing. I liked being able to talk to others in person."

As a Mercer Island librarian put it: "People want connection. When they are angry or fighting, that connection is broken. There is a real basic human skill involved in getting people to where they really want to be."



## LUNCHTIME TECH IS A BIG HIT WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A loud din filled the cafeteria as Chief Kanim Middle School students shouted to friends, laughed and chatted together over lunch.

Some tweens grew curious about the activity at the edge of the room—and discovered a unique way of tuning out the noise. KCLS Teen Librarian Maggie Wong was setting up laptop computers and soundboards, and providing kids with headsets to show them new ways to make their own music.

“Can I try it?” asked the school band’s oboe player. He and a friend, the band’s tuba player, put on headsets and began working together, pressing buttons that lit up in cobalt blue, white and bright green colors as they explored various sounds. Their heads bobbed, keeping time, and soon other kids were joining them.

**Lunchtime Tech**, as Wong dubbed the innovative program, featured specialized software and kits developed by Ableton, a company that promotes creativity through music education. While the kits are available at various libraries through KCLS’ ideaX STEAM learning program, it was Wong’s idea to bring it to the Fall City school, providing access to kids between classes.

The Snoqualmie Librarian worked with teachers and school administrators to create the partnership.

“Ableton is really interesting to this age group,” Wong said. “It’s very tactile, and it’s multi-modal; there are lights, buttons and coordinated colors.”

And, of course, audio. Wong showed students how the soundboard buttons represented a rich range of beats, notes and instruments. Kids who selected drums, for example, could pick base, snare, bongos or others to produce different rhythms.

Wong loaded a voice track and trumpets for one girl, who recently returned from a singing competition and liked pop music. She helped another boy create rap, and another experiment with ragtime. Still another girl chose piano, strings and classical music.

“It really depends on their backgrounds,” Wong said. “What they choose reflects how they incorporate music into their lives.”

The biggest challenge came from selecting what combinations they wanted, then laying down and mixing sound tracks to compose songs.

“This is very complex,” the oboe player said. “I’m really into music, and I really like the idea of making it. I’d definitely like to spend more time with the program and get more experience.”

His friend, the band’s tuba player, agreed.

“I like electronic music and thought this was really fun,” he said. “But it’s a lot harder than it looks.”



M. Trifunovic, a teacher at the school, praised KCLS for the school partnership and for adding an important educational dimension to lunchtime.

"The technology that Maggie has brought to CKMS are items that we currently do not have in our building, and this exposure to new technology has been fantastic," Trifunovic said. "The program's hands-on nature and giving our students the chance to tinker outside of class is engaging and fun."

Lunchtime Tech not only proved a great way to connect with tweens, it yielded other meaningful dividends. Wong has reached out to kids through the music program, letting them and their families know about ideaX, tutoring and other library offerings.

"I've seen familiar faces," Wong said. "It is so important for KCLS to go to where the kids are, but also to have places where kids can go. Ableton is new and different, but I remind people of all the other things KCLS offers. It is gratifying when they follow up on the invitation to come and explore!"



## PATRONS LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING AMERICAN AT WELCOMING WEEK SERIES

The immigrant experience came alive for library patrons who attended a special fall program called Becoming American as part of KCLS' celebration of National Welcoming Week.

The six-week series, held at the Redmond Library from August to October, focused on the history of American immigration, bringing together native-born residents, immigrants and refugees in an open forum to raise awareness of the benefits of welcoming everyone.

Facilitated by Nalini Iyer, an associate professor of Asian Studies at Seattle University, the series featured seven documentary film screenings followed by animated discussions. The films shown were *New York: The Power and the People*; *The Jewish Americans*; *Welcome to Shelbyville*; *The New Americans: The Nigerians*; *Destination America: The Golden Door*; *My American Girls*, and *The Search for General Tso*. In all, 163 people attended.

Some patrons attending the series were newly arrived immigrants, others recent U.S. citizens. Long-time King County residents told of family histories that included immigrants from generations ago.

Discussions were lively and illuminating, as attendees shared personal stories that defied stereotypes. One man, a technology consultant, said he was an American-born Puerto Rican who, with his Norwegian wife, adopted kids from El Salvador. One woman expressed gratitude to her mother, who emigrated from the Philippines and worked a minimum-wage job to put her children through school.

An ESL teacher told of his experiences working with "very savvy" immigrants, adding, "Discrimination is disconcerting; these people are here for a reason."

"I love the way this conversation has grown over the weeks," facilitator Iyer said.

The September 17 class featured the film, *Destination America: The Golden Door*, which placed the country's often-conflicted relationship with immigration and immigrant labor into historical context. The film focused on three groups and their reasons for leaving their homelands: Norwegians who sought arable land in the early 1800s; Irish escaping the potato famine in the mid-1800s; and Mexican workers recruited by American industry in the 1920s-.

"Once, there was no such thing as an illegal immigrant. If you could get here, you could stay," the film's narrator states. "Their faces have changed, but their reasons haven't: poverty, war, persecution. All drawn by the shimmering promise of America, reaching for a future denied them at home."

After the film and discussion of everything from globalization and wealth disparities to "criminalizing immigrants," patrons had high praise for KCLS for hosting the series, saying it had expanded their knowledge of history, immigrants and their own neighbors.



"The library is a great place, a safe place, to have these discussions," said A. Bien. The series survey showed 100 percent of attendees reported that they were "more prepared to discuss immigrant issues with others" because of the class. Many said they formed new friendships.

One survey respondent wrote, "This was a wonderful series. The discussions afterwards were enriched by the participation of so many from a variety of cultures and experiences. Their insights and sharing were almost equal to the documentaries as far as a learning experience."



## POET LAUREATE CLAUDIA CASTRO LUNA INSPIRES BUDDING POETS AT KCLS EVENT

It was an intimate setting, with 13 library patrons gathered around a table one April evening to hear Washington State Poet Laureate Claudia Castro Luna.

Some said they felt vulnerable discussing personal poems. Others wanted to be poets but didn't know where to start. Many wondered what makes a poem work.

Two hours later, patrons said their lives were transformed by Castro Luna's passion for language and belief that "we are all capable of writing poetry." Attendees wrote their own poems, encouraged by Castro Luna's creative prompts. Some tearfully shared their work aloud and were rewarded with applause from respectful classmates.

"The courage in that poem!" Castro Luna said of one poem about "a girl abandoned and hurt, alone in the world," written by a woman who said she had "never written a poem before."

One man broke into tears as he read aloud a poem reminiscent of "a past relationship with a special lady."

"A poem is an emotion; that's what poems are," Castro Luna said. "There is transcendence when we feel lifted off the page. Words help us explain emotion. Language is how we capture emotions that are hard to capture."

KCLS' Everyone's Talking About It event at Federal Way Library was held in partnership with Humanities Washington to bring people together to share experiences and a love of language, reading and literature. Attendees said the event opened doors to new ways of thinking and inspired them to

overcome their fears of writing. They credited KCLS for inviting Castro Luna, an immigrant and teacher who urged patrons to be brave and mine their memories.

"To share my poetry is very important to me," she said. "I believe with my whole heart that we are all capable of writing poetry, and it starts with reading, and exploring those places we carry inside ourselves."

In 1981, Castro Luna, then age 14, fled war-torn El Salvador with her parents and sister. Much of her writing arises from her memories of that time, as does her empathy for the plight of those fleeing oppression and "all the different kinds of wars, including extreme poverty and drugs."

Castro Luna, author of *This City and Killing Marias: A Poem for Multiple Voices*, was named Seattle's first Civic Poet in 2015. She became the first person of color to be named Washington State Poet Laureate in 2018. Her term, which runs until January 21, 2020, includes traveling to communities throughout the state to build awareness and appreciation of poetry through public readings, workshops, lectures and presentations.

C. Verellen said the most enjoyable part of the program was hearing Castro Luna read her own poetry. D. Smith said having the chance to write in class was the best part.



## STARTUP 425 PARTNERSHIP GIVES BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS SKILLS AND TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

When KCLS had a chance to collaborate with an organization with the stated mission of supporting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship on Seattle's Eastside, the Library System enthusiastically agreed. The organization, Startup 425 Foundation, meshed perfectly with KCLS' own goals of financially strengthening communities by providing technology, training and programming to help entrepreneurs transform ideas into businesses.

Throughout 2018, KCLS hosted 47 entrepreneurship classes that showed strong local demand for starting one's own business. A total 1,317 people attended at least one of the 47 classes—a 71 percent increase over the year before, confirmed Audrey Barbakoff, KCLS Community Engagement and Economic Development Manager.

"King County has an entrepreneurial spirit," Barbakoff said. "Every day, people in our community strive to turn their ideas and passions into a business."

The series covered six core subjects: developing one's idea, called "ideation;" business licensing; business plans; financing; marketing and networking/mentoring. Startup 425 classes were open to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Attendees had high praise for both the instruction and instructors, who offered pragmatic advice, valuable tips and willingly answered questions from earnest entrepreneurs on everything from personality traits, equipment and technology ("how do you make a 3-D prototype?") to copyrights and patents.

Of 628 participants who responded to a KCLS survey, 84 percent lauded teachers as "very" or

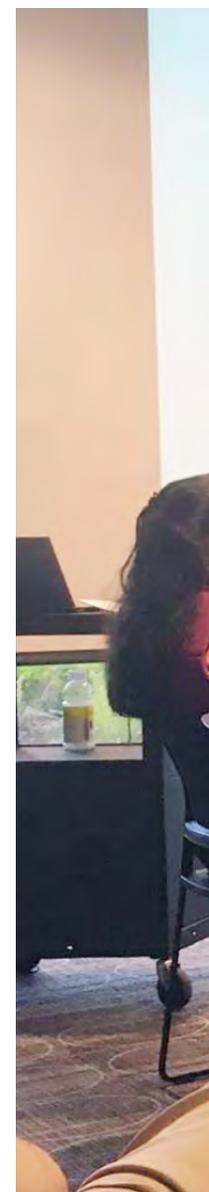
"extremely" engaging and 79 percent called the workshops "very good" or "excellent."

Barbakoff said people from all walks of life with entrepreneurial dreams come together to learn at libraries. In the survey, more than half attendees identified as people of color, and 28 percent as having a household income of \$50,000 annually, including 12 percent under \$20,000.

"In a single Startup 425 class, you might find A STEM worker who has invented a disruptive new technology; a parent or retiree returning to the workforce who wants to craft a job with balance and meaning; a new American pursuing opportunity; and an artist trying to turn a creative hobby into an income, all sitting side by side," she said.

Indeed, at a Kirkland Library class, an acupuncturist hoped to run her own clinic, while a gift shop manager wanted to pursue a more creative direction. One man said he had a "cool idea" but "didn't want to give it away," while another from Kyrgyzstan had expertise in making and selling wool hats, and wondered if he could make a go of it here. Other aspirations included operating a childcare; establishing a bed and breakfast; doing IT consulting; creating a specialized virtual-reality helmet; running a dog-grooming business; equipping equestrian instructors, and creating a healing center for traumatized children.

The Kirkland class was led by Duncan Milloy, a business consultant to the City of Kirkland, and David Ormerod, a former business executive and a 14-year volunteer mentor for SCORE, a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization that helps



small business get off the ground. The 50-year-old organization, formerly known as Service Corps of Retired Executives, is supported by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

"I've made it my mission to help people run their own business," Ormerod told the class. "I've seen everything, believe me."

Ormerod listened intently to all ideas, advising painstaking research as a critical starting point. He urged participants to take advantage of library resources.

"Research is a key aspect," he said. "The more you find out, the more you learn and the better your plan develops. Don't just Google. Librarians are HUGE sources of information!"

"I love that KCLS is doing this partnership," said J. Wagner after the Kirkland Library class. "In this area (the Eastside), with as much business and technology expertise as there is, it would be tragic not to take advantage of the talent and interest. I think it's incredibly helpful—and it's free to the public!"



## SUMMER MEALS BOOST NUTRITION-AND READING- FOR KING COUNTY FAMILIES

The three-year-old girl felt quite at home at Shoreline Library, having recently had her birthday party there. It is also where she decided she wants to be a librarian.

Therefore, there was no arm-twisting when her mother announced it was time to visit the library for KCLS' weekly **Summer Meals** program.

"We have 'Traveling Tuesdays'—the day we come to the library," N. Schuerman said, smiling at her daughter and 18-month-old son. The girl, chewing on a mozzarella stick before tackling her fruit cup, pumped her fist in approval and grinned.

"Yes!" she shouted.

"She pretends to be (Shoreline Librarian) Miss Laurie," Schuerman added. "She sings songs and reads stories to her brother."

The three joined 30 other kids, parents and caregivers attending the library's Summer Meals program on a sunny August day. There was a gentle buzz in the room, as families ate meals, played classic board games and spent time coloring.

Part of KCLS' Summer Reading Program, Summer Meals help ensure that children who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches during the school year continue to have access to free, nutritious food—for minds and bodies—when school is not in session. Everyone is welcome.

M. Okenwa sat at a table with her nine-year old daughter and seven-year old son as they ate bananas, milk, yogurt, granola and fruit popsicles. She said that Summer Meals offers "a triple benefit," providing healthy food plus social interaction and books.





"It can be hard for parents when kids are out of school; I don't want mine just watching movies at home," Okenwa said. "They like coming to the library. They see other children, play games and read a lot."

"I used to not like reading, but now I do," Okenwa's son said. "I like monster books and adventure books."

Okenwa's daughter, who wants to be a writer, said, "I like that the food is healthy, and I think reading a book is much more fun than seeing the same things around you all the time. If I am in a book, I can go anywhere, except not the places with witches and evil people."

The Summer Meals program has grown since 2014, when there were only two host libraries. Shoreline was among 12 libraries serving meals this year. Burien, Carnation, Duvall, Kent, Kingsgate, Federal Way, Federal Way 320<sup>th</sup>, Lake Hills, Newport Way, Renton Highlands and Woodmont Libraries also hosted meals.

Preliminary statistics show that more than 9,200 meals were provided, with approximately 8,200 served at 334 lunch programs and 1,000 meals served at 39 evening programs. Additionally, 2,423 books were distributed to children attending the programs.

The King County Library System Foundation provided funding for food and books, as well as transportation to some sites. KCLS also collaborated with the City of Renton, FareStart, Hunger Intervention (Shoreline), the Federal Way Multi-Service Center and Des Moines Food Bank provided the meals, which were served by volunteers from United Way Vista and AmeriCorps.

Okenwa's daughter watched volunteers pack up meals and turned to her mother.

"Hey mom, can we make those blueberry popsicles at home?"

## TEENS FIND ACCEPTANCE AND SUPPORT AT R.TAB PRIDE EVENT

November 30 was a happy night.

More than 150 LGBTQ+ teens and allies showed up at the Bellevue Art Museum (BAM), laughing and mingling with friends and family members at the **Once Upon a Pride Teen Art Event**.

Stephanie Zero, teen librarian at Redmond Library, organized the evening event with the library-based Rainbow Teen Advisory Board (R.TAB), a group of teens who create social events for LGBTQ+ youth (grades six through 12) and allies in East King County. The group partnered with BAM and their Teen Arts Council to host the event. BAM donated the space for Once Upon a Pride, which was part of R.TAB's ongoing effort to create a network of safe places in East King County for LGBTQ+ teens to meet, gather and socialize.

KCLS and the Friends of the Redmond Library provided funding for the event, which featured a teen art exhibit, crafts, access to BAM art galleries, an open-mic session, prizes, library card sign-ups, rainbow cupcakes—and a lot of smiling faces. A short documentary film created by R.TAB proved so popular, it was shown twice.

Teen Advisory Boards have existed at various libraries for years, but the Rainbow Teen Advisory Board, formed in 2017, is relatively new. It made sense, Zero said, since diversity, inclusiveness, welcoming and belonging are among the King County Library System's core values.

Attendees praised KCLS for "walking its talk."

"I never really thought I was different until I reached middle school and was labeled," said H. Kawaguchi, age 14. "I always love these events. They are fun and important; the sense of security is huge. I've heard that from everyone."

She added, "R.TAB has helped teens find a new family, especially if they're not accepted at home or being told they're too young to decide their identity."

The parents of a high-school senior and R.TAB member who helped create the documentary, praised KCLS for providing not only a sense of belonging and positive activities, but leadership skills for LGBTQ+ teens.

"KCLS' involvement means a lot, both to kids and their parents," the girl's father said. "They're our children. How can we not support them?"

The teen group has held other events, including summer picnics at parks, dances, game nights and cookie-decorating parties. Teens interviewed for the film praised R.TAB for promoting self-acceptance, creating a "happy and open atmosphere" at events and meetings, and for opportunities to forge meaningful relationships.

One non-binary demi-boy in the film held a sign that summarized sentiments well: "I am enough."

Zero told the gathering that the inspiration for R.TAB came from a discussion with a Youth Eastside Services counselor, who noted that LGBTQ+ teens lacked safe places to gather, particularly on the Eastside. Many teens who were too young to drive or lacked transportation said it made a big difference to have social opportunities outside Seattle.

"Part of my job description as a teen librarian is to provide programs and ways to bring people together," Zero said. "R.TAB seemed like a natural extension."



The event drew enthusiastic responses, including one transgender teen who had recently changed his legal name to reflect his gender identity.

"He was super-excited to get a new library card," Zero said. "It was the first thing he was able to get with his new ID!"



