

# KCLS STORIES | 2019

## Introduction

The King County Library System, one of the busiest in the country, connects with its patrons in wide-ranging ways, impacting their lives for the better. The year 2019 included inspiration, creativity, knowledge, diversity and enrichment for county residents through KCLS services, programs and resources. The following stories show how KCLS positively influenced and inspired patrons, ranging from art, technology and business education to being made to feel valued and welcomed as members of our shared community. We hope you enjoy reading about some of the opportunities the Library System created to help and support you, the public.

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# A Warm Welcome for Immigrants and Refugees at the Kent Library

The King County Library System's message to refugees and immigrants is simple: You are welcome here.

To reinforce that message, KCLS has opened a Welcoming Center at Kent Library, where those new to King County are offered assistance, encouragement and social connections, and greeted with Welcome Ambassadors' smiles.

The Welcoming Center, which launched in May after considerable planning, is a KCLS Foundation-sponsored initiative aiming to let new arrivals know that the library is a safe and inclusive place where they belong. It offers support to overcome challenges and to transition to new lives.

Immigrants and refugees can connect with information and resources such as legal, computer, financial and job-search assistance, as well as help with English skills and pathways to citizenship. Issues as serious as domestic abuse and necessary as obtaining a driver's license, health insurance or navigating school systems can be addressed.

Just as important, the Welcoming Center offers a place of social connection for all ages through programs such as children's Story Times and a monthly Family Social Time.

Keys to the Center's success are Welcome Ambassadors Mohammad Jan Ofuq from Afghanistan, and Saido Alinur from Somalia. Both are experienced refugee-assistance workers who offer an **Ask a Welcoming Ambassador** service every Thursday from 6-9pm. Their smiling faces, knowledge and willingness to answer questions go a long way toward making new arrivals feel welcome, less stressed and more hopeful.

Ofuq, who arrived three years ago and has earned a law degree from Seattle University, said most resettlement agencies work with immigrants and refugees only for a limited period of time—usually up to 90 days—and “this is not even enough to get resettled and fully integrate into the community.”



“I came as an immigrant and know what challenges newcomers face and how happy they become when they received guidance and assistance,” Ofuq said. “As the Welcoming Center is located at the library, a public place, this makes it neutral...newcomers feel welcomed and confident to come and ask questions or ask for resources. It is a community hub.”

KCLS is one of seven primary stakeholders for the Welcoming Center, working with the City of Kent; the Multi-Service Center (MSC); Jewish Family Services; Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN); Project Feast and the University of Washington's Information School (iSchool). KCLS also partners with the Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP).

Veena Prasad, Founder and Executive Director of Project Feast, said the Welcoming Center “really resonated with our mission.” The nonprofit social enterprise empowers refugee and immigrant cooks, helping them to find jobs in the food industry. It also uses food to bring people together and to create a greater sense of community.

“We really need to create more spaces like the Welcoming Center, where people can feel a sense of belonging and share who they are and not be afraid,” Prasad said. “It's so important that we come together. The Center is a great step toward that.”

“I've seen a lot of different groups and programs and events and resources geared toward refugees and immigrant groups, and if you look at it from their point of view, it's overwhelming,” Prasad added. “I feel like the library is a brilliant way to bring all these resources together in one place and to make them accessible.”





# Baby Boomers Tackle Retirement Issues at “Bootcamp”

Aging doesn't have to be scary. But you need a plan.

That message was among the many inspiring and needed layers of advice offered at a **Baby Boomer Bootcamp**.

An estimated 70 people came to the event held at the Issaquah Senior Center. It was the third of a four-part series.

KCLS partnered with University House and the City of Issaquah to provide public information about longevity. The half-day session featured expert speakers on healthy aging, retirement planning, finances, Medicare, caregiving, advocacy, dementia, hospitalization and other issues of living longer.



But how do you prepare for the unknown?

Experts reassured attendees that there were actually many ways. But they emphasized the importance of gathering necessary information, thinking about individual and family issues and taking action steps—the earlier the better.

“The main anxiety comes from not knowing,” Financial Planner Kelli Young told the gathering. “Retirement looks very different from how it used to. “You need to think ahead, take inventory and look long-term,” Young said. “The key is having the right information—even if it’s something you don’t want to hear.”

Attendees praised KCLS for making available key information, and for offering workshops and other opportunities for not only asking questions but to discuss personal situations with others.

“This has been great,” said K. Booher, who is eyeing retirement. “I’m definitely going to the next Bootcamp. All the information makes me realize there is a lot to think about, but it makes planning much more concrete. I appreciate that all this was free and that it was held on a weekend when I could come.”

Another patron, A. Hansen, agreed. The two women had just met, but already were info-sharing and exchanging emails due to similar interests.

“This event was very helpful,” Hansen said. “Retirement has come up so fast; there is a lot to learn and plan for. The workshop on Medicare was especially helpful. The library’s focus on information was great. I didn’t feel like I was being sold something; I didn’t feel any pressure.”

Aging expert Jeanette Franks began her talk, **Seven Actions You Can Take to Avoid a Nursing Home**, with the question: “How many of you want to spend the last year of your life in a nursing home?”

Nobody raised a hand.

Franks engaged the audience in figuring out the seven actions. Most got the first six: healthy living (diet, exercise, sleep, brain health); socialization; financial planning; having a purpose and lifelong learning. The one they didn’t get: end-of-life planning.

“Nobody wants to talk about this,” Franks said. “But you need to know what you want and document it so others will honor your choices.”

J. McCauley had high praise for the event, and for KCLS.

“This has really motivated me to plan for my future,” McCauley said. “I liked the name Baby Boomer Bootcamp; it was more inspirational and I felt legitimized. Yes, we’re all over 55, but we’re all unique. The challenges are different for each of us and here, we felt supported.

“The whole event was very beneficial,” she said. “KCLS is really helping the public.”



# Early Literacy Advocate, Storyteller and Author Linda Ernst Retires from KCLS

Linda Ernst opened up *The Gingerbread Boy*, but she didn't just read it. The former drama student altered her voice for each character—the wily fox, the cow, the farmer and even the neighing horse. She paused for effect, then sped her voice across the page to heighten action.

Children and their parents were spellbound. So perhaps Ernst should not have been surprised by the outpouring of affection at her final Story Time on December 12 at the Mercer Island Library. Children wrapped their arms around her neck with lingering hugs. Parents had tears in their eyes. Reluctantly departing, they said, "Goodbye Miss Linda. We will miss you!"

KCLS colleagues describe Ernst, who retired in December after 35 years, as "the consummate children's librarian." The devoted storyteller, who has authored four books and spent her career connecting children to literature and parents to their children, is stepping back as she awaits a kidney transplant.

"It's overwhelming," she said. "It hasn't really hit me yet."

Ernst, who is a mother herself, always believed in the integrity of children, their capacity to learn, and the importance of teaching parents to bond with children by reading aloud to them. Mr. Rogers was right, Ernst believed, and so she advocated for children and championed early literacy, both

at KCLS and at the national level. She took Summer Reading outreach seriously. And her books—*Lapsit Services for the Very Young Child*; *Lapsit Services for the Very Young II*; *Baby Rhyming Time* and *The Essential Lapsit Guide*, all aim to teach and empower the parents and caregivers of infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

"Every week, I give parents something they



can do with their kids," Ernst said. "Story Times help reinstate the importance of early learning and parenting support, which are vital."

Ernst said among her concerns for children are society's outsized focus on technology.

"I like creating relationships," Ernst said. "Sadly, adults these days pay more attention to their cell phones than their children. I have seen children put building blocks up to their ears instead of stacking them. "Parents think they need all the latest technology for their kids to succeed, but research shows that kids don't learn from flat screens; they learn from their parents," she said. "Parents have forgotten that playing is a child's job, and that the adult's job is to teach kids to play."

In an inspired tribute, KCLS colleagues Kirsten Corning, Jackie Lockwood and Vicki Heck wrote, "No computer can duplicate Linda's amazing ability to match the right book to the right child, or answer the most challenging reader's advisory. She has advanced early literacy by mentoring children's librarians here and around the nation. The communities and children where Linda has worked have been blessed by her caring, her enthusiasm and her professional knowledge."

In 2004, the Children's and Young Adult Services Interest Group of the Washington Library Association awarded Ernst its CAYAS Award for Visionary Library Service to Youth. She has served as Chair of the Early Childhood Programs and Services Committee for the Association for Library Service to Children, and was a member of the 2007 Caldecott Award committee.

Ernst also has conducted training workshops for KCLS and other local and national library systems. She hopes to continue training and consulting on Story Times and children's programming—and may write another book.

"We do our children's programming with intent and purpose," Ernst said. "Everyone has the capability to be more than they think they are."





# Economic Empowerment Initiative Includes Focus on Artificial Intelligence

The King County Library System in 2019 tackled an issue of major importance to many patrons—the future of work.

Thanks to an \$81,000 Workforce Development grant to the KCLS Foundation, the Library System brought together experts to teach a fall series called **Economic Empowerment**. One of KCLS' Strategic Initiatives, the Economic Empowerment program connected low-income and diverse populations with the knowledge and skills to successfully navigate today's economic landscape, helping to build communities of inclusion throughout King County.

Aiming to educate and encourage workforce exploration, the wide-ranging series included topics such as Business Entrepreneurship; Artificial Intelligence; Understanding Social Media and the Future; Emerging Technology; Opportunities in Healthcare; The Art of Networking, and How to Make Money with Your Creativity. Various libraries also hosted two films: *A New Economy*, and *She Started It: A Documentary on Women Tech Volunteers*.

KCLS joined forces with a number of partners, including creativity and networking coaches, authors, business owners and technology managers. The Library System also partnered with such organizations as Entrepreneurship and Small Business (ESB); Business Impact NW and Seattle-King County WorkSource.

Of all the topics, Artificial Intelligence or AI, had the highest learning curve for patrons. Some who came to an October class at Bellevue Library had heard about facial recognition, but few knew much more about what AI is or why it has been receiving more media attention.

Chris Emura, Executive Director of Engineering at Vulcan Inc., gave an overview of AI and addressed questions at the end of class, to the gratitude of all attending.



Emura said because AI is an emerging technology, it is little understood by the average person. The technology uses high-powered computer systems to process tons of data ("Big Data") with great speed to mimic human abilities to make decisions or perform tasks. AI is already being used for real estate, trade, medical, legal, security, business and agricultural applications. It is also being used for military purposes, with China and the U.S. leading.

Through a separate grant, KCLS is exploring conversational (voice-recognition) applications such as Siri and Alexa as a means of increasing digital equity and access to library resources.

While AI has great promise and is becoming more prevalent, many issues—ethical, economic, privacy, biases, legislative and technical—remain to be resolved, Emura explained.

"We don't understand the ramifications, like taking away jobs," he said. "In real estate, for example, AI can provide information on market trends, crime maps and schools. But in France, they're legislating this. Should big data impact who a landlord can take on as a tenant?"

Attendees said the class helped "lift the veil" on a previously mysterious subject. "I knew AI is a hot field right now, but didn't understand it. It seemed so complicated," said C. McCandless. "The class really helped me understand what machine learning is all about."

Another said the class convinced her to pursue an AI career. She attended the class with her 13-year-old daughter, who is also interested in AI.

"It was really, really awesome," she said. "It's great that KCLS offered this class. It is so important. We love the library. It opens up creativity for all ages, and you can learn more what's happening in the world."



# KCLS Teams with UW iSchool to Bring Virtual Reality to Echo Glen

The University of Washington's Information School (UW iSchool) and Washington State Library (WSL) have been exploring how Virtual Reality (VR) in libraries can engage communities and enhance learning.

Thanks to a UW iSchool grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), middle and high school students from Echo Glen Children's Center for Juvenile Rehabilitation got in on the action. Through a series of workshops facilitated by faculty and students from the iSchool, Echo Glen students swam with sharks, built tiny towns, cooked in a professional restaurant and created 3D sculptures out of light.

UW Museology students also created an exhibit to share how and why VR matters to Echo Glen students. The public display, called **Here but Not Here**, was held at the Snoqualmie Library June 4-12 and featured the students' artwork and personal narratives about their VR experiences.

Several of the 24 students in the program had the chance to visit the library exhibit and check out books and DVDs. Teen Librarians Maggie Wong and Ian Chapman coordinated the exhibit visit with UW and Echo Glen.

"There was a lot of crazy stuff, but it was really cool," said one teenage boy, who liked the shark program best, although it made him "feel a little bit dizzy."

Another teen, gazing at kiosks displaying student-designed cardboard goggles and other 3D artwork, told a librarian, "I'm not artistic." And yet, in the virtual world, he was.

Said another student, "I felt like I was in a different place that was real. I actually thought it was a place I could go and get away."

Besides being realistic, the project provided students access to the digital arts and Virtual Reality industry as part of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) learning, a major educational focus nation-wide. Students learned new skills in digital media, storytelling and self-expression, plus life skills like cooking and shopping. Students developed academic and workforce skills, showing that libraries can "serve as access points to potential career pathways in the digital arts for young people during and after incarceration," said Negin Dahya, assistant professor at the UW iSchool and project lead.

"The kids and school principal and teachers all seemed to really love the program," Dahya said. "The kids were super-engaged, working collaboratively, creating and engaging in positive play and art-making throughout the program."

The students' VR experience improved behavior as well, said Echo Glen Principal LaShae Lee. She said that by using VR, "students showed vulnerabilities they are not typically comfortable showing. And VR is a school experience, not a prison experience, so it felt more normalized."

"It had a school-wide impact," Lee said. "There were fewer disciplinary problems; campus-wide, student behavior improved."

The Echo Glen VR project was funded by an \$89,109 IMLS grant to the UW iSchool and its partners, including KCLS and the WSL. Matching funds from the UW and WSL rounded out the full cost of \$178,577. KCLS contributed exhibit staff time, display boards and the library space.

The UW and partners were among 12 grantees nationwide as part of IMLS' Community Catalyst Initiative, which encourages museums and libraries to collaborate on approaches to positive community change.

Librarian Wong said that the event reinforced her belief that libraries are uniquely suited to help all residents, including those at Echo Glen.

"Everyone who walks into our buildings has the potential to be helped, but there is even a greater potential with these kids because they have so much going against them," Wong said. "When (KCLS) staff builds relationships with individuals and establishes a connection, it plants a seed that the public library is a source of support, here to help."





# Library Advisory Boards and KCLS Build Partnership with Special Forum

The King County Library System values partnerships with government, business, education and other organizations. Its relationship with its Library Advisory Boards (LABS) is no exception.

Library Advisory Boards are all-volunteer, city-appointed boards which serve as liaisons between KCLS and cities, representing the interests of their communities and advocating for libraries to residents. This relationship is so essential, KCLS held a Library Advisory Board Forum at the Service Center in April. The half-day event brought together 50 members of 11 LABS across the county, offering a chance to learn about and discuss issues concerning KCLS' present and future.

The forum provided a two-way flow of information, keeping board members in the loop while listening to their concerns and ideas, with the shared goal of enhancing citizen engagement. Board members appreciated the opportunity to gain knowledge and insights into KCLS' operations, challenges and strategic goals.

Lisa Rosenblum, the Library System's Executive Director, and Finance Director Nicholas Lee spoke on "The Political and Financial Environment of KCLS." The background was important, board members said, since KCLS is a special taxing district established by law, with an operations budget heavily reliant on property taxes.

"You are so important to the advocacy we need day in and day out," Rosenblum told the gathering. "KCLS is a big library system, yet it is very local. Every community is different, so your influence is important. You are that connection."

John Sheller, KCLS' Government Relations Manager, echoed those sentiments, telling the group they are critical to strong collaboration between the Library System and its patrons.

"As advocates, you are the keys to helping KCLS identify and meet community needs, goals and interests," Sheller said. "This is especially important because we are increasingly focusing on what cities say they want."

Chad Davis, a Library Advisory Board member for Bellevue, cited some of the many ways libraries are doing just that, such as offering programs on entrepreneurship. Davis said the library helps residents improve their lives by developing life skills, hosting tax assistance and other continuing education programs, and by providing staff expertise, databases and other resources. Library meeting and study rooms, whether for personal development or networking, are constantly in demand, he said.

Among the items discussed was the likelihood that KCLS will go to voters in 2020 to seek a levy lid lift, deemed necessary to avoid cuts amid rising technology and operations costs. Voter approval would help maintain the high level of quality and comprehensive service that has earned KCLS a five-star rating—the highest possible—from the Library Journal Index of Public Library Services for overall excellence.

Rebecca Birch, a seven-year Library Advisory Board member for Bothell, said while citizens may be tax-wary, the good news is that "people love their libraries."

"I've always been an advocate for libraries," Birch said. "I'm a tremendous reader, a supporter of literature and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education, as well as literacy. I do believe the public understands the value of their community libraries, especially if we are to live in the 21st century."



# Libraries Provide Educational Support for Homeschoolers

**Go to any KCLS library on any given day, and you will find many of KCLS' most ardent and loyal patrons—homeschoolers.**

Homeschool parents and their children take full advantage of library books, collections, resources, programs and services to further educational goals. Parents say the joy of homeschooling is being able to encourage their kids' curiosity, guiding them and actively participating on a lifelong path of learning.

They say there is no better place for that than their library.



Homeschool children love books and movies, carrying piles of them to the check-out desk. They read for pleasure as well as to meet curriculum requirements and prepare for tests. They also appreciate the printing, Museum Passes and KCLS' online resources.

Well aware of the importance of socialization, homeschool parents are enthusiastic advocates of library programs. They attend book groups, Story Times, Instrument Petting Zoos, Summer Reading Programs and myriad other activities. They ensure their kids learn about STEAM (Science, Engineering, Technology, Art/Design and Math) education through ideaX Makerspace and other tech-centric workshops.

"When my kids were little, our homeschooling pretty much consisted of every library program that we could find," said A. Guthrie. "We just drove to different libraries wherever they were having something. They thought it was fun hanging out in the kids' area around all the books, trying different ones."

Three homeschool moms—M. Riggs, S. Cammeresi and C. Jones—have become friends, regularly meeting at the Kenmore Library, their "home away from home." While the kids stacked up books to check out, the moms gathered required reading and references for lessons. The seven kids, ages 3 to 8, also now friends, explored the shelves, used the computers and plugged in audiobooks.

Homeschool parents say their children have blossomed at libraries, overcoming shyness to talk to others and even venturing to ask librarians questions. They often feed off other people's ideas, in print and socially.

"Kids learn to collaborate and support each other at the library. It is a welcoming place where they come to listen and engage," M. Riggs said. "There's always the next question. We get to answer those questions in large part through KCLS."

Amy Leonard, Chair of the Washington Homeschool Association, homeschooled all six of her children and can vouch for the importance of libraries. Her second daughter, K. Leonard, wrote her college-admissions essay about the role KCLS libraries played in her education. She praised

the quiet spaces to study and learn from books as varied as "anatomy, a mystery, differing viewpoints on Abraham Lincoln, a children's novel and a book of Emily Dickinson's poems."

In recent years, the face of homeschooling has changed, with the biggest growth coming from Hispanic/Latino and African American families.

"Homeschooling began among mostly white Americans, but that has changed; it has become more diverse and inclusive over the years," Leonard said.

Rachel McDonald, KCLS librarian at Tukwila Library, agrees.

"Homeschooling families represent different cultures, ethnicities, religions and socioeconomic groups," McDonald said. "We're fortunate to have a dynamic and thriving book group for homeschoolers at the Tukwila Library."

Homeschool parents pay property taxes that support public schools (and libraries), but have chosen to forego a second income to stay home with their kids.

"The libraries are so important, especially when you're on a tight budget," said T. Brundage, who loves the Tukwila Library. "The feeling of community we get from being frequent library users is also really important and gives connection to the bigger world outside our home. The library has really played a huge role in our success schooling at home. It has broadened and enriched my children's education."

"Libraries definitely play a vital role for homeschoolers in educating their children. They rely on them," Leonard said. "Without having their students enrolled in public school, they do not have the same access to school libraries and education funding; public libraries are a significant resource for that reason."



# Mobile Services Offers New “Adventures” to Snoqualmie Tribe Elders

**They were seeing scenery they had never seen before, and it was beautiful, even meditative.**

Snoqualmie Tribe elders gave King County Library System’s Mobile Services rave reviews for bringing virtual reality (VR) to Tribal headquarters in North Bend. Some, who don’t have computers or email, said VR opened their minds to technology as well as nature.

“They were giggling like little kids. They really enjoyed it,” said Susana Gonzalez Pueschner, Outreach Services Specialist with Mobile Services, who facilitated the event. KCLS is exploring VR and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as part of an Economic Empowerment Strategic Initiative, ensuring libraries are on the leading edge of technology to benefit, educate and empower patrons.

The October 18 visit was part of KCLS’ **Music, Memory and Virtual Reality for Older Adults Program**, funded by an \$11,000 grant awarded to the KCLS Foundation by the Snoqualmie Tribe. The one-year grant aimed to increase independence, enhance quality of life and promote meaningful connections with seniors, particularly those living in retirement communities, through programs utilizing arts, crafts and modern technology.

The grant included VR visits to five sites, as well as music and memory sessions at five independent living, assisted living or memory care facilities. It also funded a training day for senior-living activity coordinators.

The audio visual realism and perspective of virtual reality allowed participants to travel to faraway places and to enjoy natural wonders and unusual sensations. They saw and heard cascading waterfalls in tropical forests and the quietness of Bryce Canyon after a snowfall. They listened to relaxing music at sandy beaches, wondering if their feet would get wet from the crashing waves.

After a storytelling and crafts session, Gonzalez Pueschner seated elders in a chair and fit them with headphones and VR headsets. She rotated the chair for a 360-degree experience, reminding viewers to look up and down.

“Oh my gosh, there’s a kangaroo! It seemed so close, I could touch it!”

“Everyone had the same reaction,” she said. “And everyone wanted to do it again.”

Elders “visited” the Grand Canyon, viewing its massive geology and the winding Colorado River as if they were hiking a trail above it. Participants also “became” deep-sea divers, feeling as if they were swimming among schools of fish.

“It was amazing. It really felt like you were underwater, with the sun shining through the surface,” said Anetta Townsend of the Snoqualmie Tribe’s Elder Care Program, who coordinated the visit with Wendy Pender, KCLS’ Older Adults Program Coordinator.

“Everyone was very excited about it,” Townsend said. “I went to Paris and saw the Eiffel Tower, and also did the roller-coaster ride. The car kept climbing and climbing. I could do it with VR—but never in real life!”

L. Sweet-Dorman also considered VR a revelation.

“It was fun and it introduced me to something new,” she said. “If KCLS hadn’t come here, I don’t think I’d ever have tried it. Bringing it here was great!”



Seniors at other VR visits expressed similar praise in surveys. They thanked KCLS for providing “the gift of memory” and “new adventures.” One woman wrote, “I wish I could do this every day. Loved the sea and land. Life is beautiful through this experience.”

Tribal Elder L. Baxter agreed.

“We don’t do computers, so it made a difference that KCLS came to us,” Baxter said. “I didn’t get dizzy or disoriented and thought the scenery and nature was great. It takes you to different places you’ve never been to before—other parts of the world. I would love it if the library would come again!”

# One Patron's Mission: Visit Every Library to See KCLS' Art Collection

When Catherine Dwyer retired from teaching in 2015, she decided to visit KCLS libraries, starting with the Muckleshoot Library.

Somewhere along the way—she does not remember exactly when—the Auburn resident discovered the catalog of KCLS' art collection, entitled **KCLS Art in Libraries: A Visual Journey of Possibilities, Knowledge and Imagination**. Dwyer was so enchanted, she launched her own treasure hunt to see the paintings, sculptures and other art at each of KCLS' 49 public libraries.

"People in King County don't know there's so much art in their libraries!" Dwyer said. "At first I was motivated to visit the libraries themselves, then I learned about the art. I had the catalog so I knew what to look for."

Dwyer filled journals with her own poetry, photos and observations about libraries and art. She enjoyed connecting with KCLS staff and other patrons. It took nearly four years; her last stop was the new Kent Panther Lake Library in June, 2019.

"Time was never a factor," she said. "Anyone could see all the libraries in 30 days, but I wanted to savor them."

*Eagle Landing* by Kathleen Fruge-Brown, at Burien Library did not depict an eagle, but a locale. Nor did Dwyer expect the impressive ceramic and clay work at the Vashon Library.

She was delighted with three **Jacob Lawrence** paintings installed in 2019 at the new Kent Panther Lake Library. The pieces are entitled *Strategy*, *St. Marc* and *The Coachman*.

"Jacob Lawrence!" she exclaimed. "I really appreciated that the artists are so prominent and from the Northwest."

KCLS' collection ranges from art depicting landscapes or local history to pieces challenging viewers to think in new ways about the environment, technology or art itself. Incorporating the joy of learning and other library themes, the art celebrates creativity and inventiveness and inspires the imagination. Private funding, Friends of the Library and other organizations helped build the early collection; more recent pieces were funded by the \$172 million Capital Bond measure approved by voters in 2004.

Given a chance to teach others, Dwyer could not curb her enthusiasm.

"Have you seen the Turtle?" she asked patrons at Des Moines Library, referring to **Mark T. Stevenson's** sculpture, *Turtle Island Puget Sound*. It features a Puget Sound map embedded in the turtle shell.

"If they didn't mention the map, I'd know they hadn't really seen it," she laughed.

With so many beautiful and intriguing pieces, Dwyer is hard-pressed to name a favorite. There's the terrazzo floor by **Paul Marioni** at Burien Library; *The Owl Family* sculpture by **Frank Evans** at Kent Library and the "playful and joyful" untitled mural by **Kelly Staton** at Tukwila.

"I love them all, but I guess I'd choose *Thwacker* (an outdoor sculpture by **John T. Young** at Federal Way Library)," she said.

Dwyer said the art collection gives people another excellent reason to visit libraries. Her odyssey inspired her to write poetry and to explore books, art and "magical places" she never knew existed, including the Exploring Garden at Woodinville, and many parks.

"KCLS unlocks doors; that's their way," Dwyer said. "I loved being a library tourist in my own county. And the staff is awesome. Every single time I've asked for something, the answer has always been 'yes.'"

Her advice: "Take your time and enjoy yourself. It's all great!"



Like being close to the last chapter of a great book, the reader wants to know how it ends, while at the same time doesn't want it to end! That's how I feel about my journey."

Dwyer said she was often surprised by KCLS' collection of art, citing works like *Enceladus* by **Claude Zervas**, installed in the floor rather than a wall at Kenmore Library. The painting,



# Patrons Learn How to Live as Zero Waste Heroes

Do you know where your trash should go?

A King County Library System program called **Become a Zero Waste Hero** answered that question, educating patrons about best practices to live more sustainably. The program, in partnership with the City of Bellevue, provided information on new disposal and recycling regulations, and how to properly sort a wide range of refuse.

KCLS hosted 11 total classes at Newport Way, Bellevue, Lake Hills and Shoreline Libraries, drawing 330 people.

Knowing how to dispose of household items has become more critical as laws change in response to environmental impacts and disposal limitations. Beginning in 2020, the City of Seattle and King County will no longer accept plastic bags in recycling because they hamper collection machinery. Residents will be asked to switch to reusable bags, and to drop off plastic bags at designated locations listed on city and county websites.

Instructor Sam Wilder, President of Wilder Environmental Consulting, told patrons that following zero waste guidelines reduces trash volumes at Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. The 60-year-old facility, the only active landfill



in King County, is running out of room amid continued population growth, and is estimated to operate for only nine more years. If and where to site another landfill is a geographic and political conundrum.

"Nobody's eager to take our garbage," Wilder said. Her message, "We can all do our part," rang true with the 30 attendees at an October 21 class at the Bellevue Library.

Wilder distributed information sheets detailing where to place items ranging from pet waste to styrofoam, and gave tips on storing and saving food. Hands-on activities helped participants re-think which item goes into which waste stream.

"Wasted food is a big issue, but is preventable," Wilder said. One King County study found that 25% of food purchases at the grocery store winds up in the garbage.

"That's like walking out of the grocery store and dumping an entire bag in the trash can," she said.

Said one man, "I didn't realize there was a difference between a 'sell by' date and an expiration date until tonight. Now I don't have to throw out food just because it's a few days past its sell date."

Attendees agreed that they gained valuable knowledge they can put to daily use. As one woman put it, "There's so much to know about this subject, this really could have been an all-day class!"

Patrons also appreciated interactive exercises that socially engaged them with others who cared about the environment. Many stayed after class to chat, share and ask questions about items from ceramics to old wooden fence posts.

"I cannot say enough positive things about 'Recycling Sam (Wilder),' " said K. Smith. She praised KCLS for offering the program to the public, helping to "make our world a smarter, cleaner, brighter place to live!"





# Popular KCLS Repair Cafés Help Fix Household Items—and the Environment

The oak captain's chair had been in the family for 50 years, part of a cherished dining room set. But unlike the rest of the set, the chair had been sidelined with a broken arm.

S. Blanchard wanted to save it. So she took a chance on the King County Library System's **Repair Café**—and was thrilled that volunteer “fixers” fully restored the piece.

“I wanted this chair,” Blanchard said at a July event at the Shoreline Library. “It’s old, but I love it and am still proud of it. They did a great job; they drilled it, put a new screw in and glued it. It’s like new!”

Patrons say that giving new life to valued items and saving money are big reasons for attending Repair Cafés, also called Repair Fairs. But most agree that the primary motivators are environmental. They want to fix, refurbish and repurpose belongings to reduce waste and divert “stuff” out of the county’s increasingly burdened landfill.



The program, in its third year as a partnership between KCLS and the Solid Waste Division of King County Natural Resources and Parks, has proven as useful as it is eco-friendly, drawing some first-time library visitors and bringing together people of all ages. So far this year, patrons and do-it-yourselfers have flocked to eight of 10 free-of-charge events. More than 100 patrons came to the Shoreline event; 150 came to a similar event at the Bellevue Library.

Among the items that have been repaired, sharpened or mended are lamps, clocks, toasters, pruning shears, luggage, coffeemakers, bedding and backpacks.

Adult Services Librarian Julia Gibson organized the Shoreline event, where people signed up and waited for help from “handy” volunteers, including retired engineers, electricians and teachers. One woman brought in a rowing machine. One volunteer fixed a vacuum blocked by a lip balm tube, candy wrappers and dog fur.

“I did want to keep my blouse,” said one woman after seamstress K. Eytcheson replaced its worn elastic. “But mainly, I wanted to keep it out of the landfill. I care about my planet and the next generation.”

J. Stafford brought in a broken transistor radio “from the early 80s” that had special meaning to him; he won it in a March of Dimes Walkathon. Volunteer D. Anderson pulled it apart and determined that the volume control “has a bunch of crud in it.” Dabbing a Q-tip in alcohol, Anderson cleaned it, manipulated some wiring and the radio, despite some static, was back to its tunes-playing self.

“This is so impressive,” a pleased Stafford said. “All the fixers, with their skills, they’re just so nice and helpful. It’s really great that KCLS does this!”

Deirdre Miller, KCLS Regional Manager at Shoreline, had a chance to chat with patrons, confirming that “there were a lot of grateful comments; people said ‘we loved this program’ and ‘please do it again.’”

The program is part of KCLS’ mission to create public opportunities for education and meaningful social connections.

As one participant put it: “I absolutely give Repair Cafés a thumbs-up. KCLS deserves thanks for putting it on!”



# Putting the Cart before the Readers is a Welcome Service for Area Seniors

Once a month, KCLS' Traveling Library Center (TLC) librarians arrive at the Chateau at Bothell Landing, wheeling carts full of books into a room packed with eager senior readers.

Residents of the assisted living facility surround the carts, selecting books and sharing what they enjoyed about their latest read. They line up, still chatting, as KCLS outreach specialists Carrie Heiser and Heather Harris check out piles of books.

"I thought *A Man Called Ove* was better," one woman tells a friend. One man, I. Rosen, raves about a book he had just finished, *Sea of Glory* by Nathaniel Philbrick, telling others, "it was thick and a deterrent to sleep. I'd wake up in the middle of the night and read it!"

To say residents are enthusiastic and grateful is an understatement. The popular visits, part of KCLS Mobile Services, is a boon to those who are homebound or who can no longer drive or get about easily. The service also brings together those who share a love of reading and learning. Research shows that such social interactions not only build relationships, but produce mental and physical health benefits by making people feel more connected and less isolated.

On September 26, 35 patrons participated. By year's end, Mobile Services made 4,160 visits to seniors, served 34,394 people and checked out an estimated 150,000 items across all visits.

"It's the best service you could have in your life!" exclaims retired schoolteacher A. Hoagland, loading books onto the seat of his walker.



"You can order any book online, and they bring it to you," Hoagland enthuses. "I like **Diana Gabaldon**; I've read all of *Outlander*, so now I'm reading *Lord John and the Brotherhood of the Blade*." "I'm happy that at age 94 I can still read!"

He smiles at a woman heading back to her room, her wheelchair heaped with 10 books.

"I think the world of KCLS and this service," Rosen says. "I'm a lifelong library addict. I think reading keeps our minds sharp."

B. Hawes, chair of Chateau's Library Committee, agrees.

"It keeps us all learning new things, and Carrie is really good at recommending books," Hawes says. "Having the library come to us makes a big difference for people here."

Hawes says the positive benefits are especially pronounced for some. One of the residents, a former deep-sea diver, was incapacitated after an accident years ago. He can no longer read, but a fellow resident brings materials and reads to him. The man also enjoys books on tape, photo and picture books and war stories.

J. Rutherford, age 97, sits in the same chair every time KCLS comes; residents have dubbed it the "Boss Lady Chair."

"I have bad knees, don't drive and can't get to libraries," Rutherford says. "I'm a lifelong reader, though now I've advanced to large print. KCLS coming here is the most marvelous service any of us could ask for."



# Verna and Katrina's Excellent Adventure: Visiting all KCLS Libraries

**They exist, therefore they should be seen.**

That's the philosophy behind two bibliophiles' exuberant challenge: to check out all 49 KCLS public libraries.

Verna Seal, a Tukwila City Council Member, and neighbor Katrina Dohn, a teacher, launched their mission after talking with Tukwila Library Technical Assistant Patricia Maltzberger, who told them she had visited every library, collecting "passport" stamps through a special KCLS staff program.

"I thought, 'I want to do that,'" Seal said. "Katrina and I both love books and love libraries. Basically, we decided to visit them because they are there."

The time was right. Earlier this year, KCLS completed the final two libraries under a \$172 million Capital Improvement Plan approved by voters in 2004. The plan resulted in 17 new libraries, 11 expanded libraries and 15 renovated libraries, plus other amenities, expanding the King County Library System by nearly 30%.

The friends' first weekend visit was to their home library, Tukwila, on July 15. On July 20, they toured nine libraries, starting at Skykomish in KCLS' northeast corner and ending up at the North Bend and Issaquah Libraries. By early September, they had visited 27 libraries, collecting treasured knowledge, photos and memories.

"We're doing this for fun and because we love books, but we didn't want to just visit the libraries," Seal said. "We wanted to find out from staff what they thought was each library's most unique characteristic."

Sometimes others chipped in. A man named Mike told them, "The patrons at Carnation are what make this library unique. The staff knows us by name. They are the best."

"It all started out as an adventure, but we've learned such cool things about all these libraries," Dohn said. "Each library is different, and each one reflects its demographics. Some communities are more urban, others rural and agricultural. You can tell KCLS' goal is meeting community needs."

They cited Covington's "gorgeous woodsy views," Issaquah's fairy garden, Woodmont's Seed Library and Snoqualmie Library's map for hikers. They learned you could pick up books at tiny Redmond Ridge, and that many libraries have bicycle repair stations. Sharing fond childhood memories of "bookmobiles," they ran after one at the Fairwood Library to snap a photo.

The two friends also were pleasantly surprised by KCLS' varied artwork, library architecture and even landscaping.

Seal said she was initially skeptical about a library inside a shopping mall, but became a believer after visiting the Library Connection @ Southcenter.

"It was 8pm and the library was packed," she said. "People were even printing out their (airline) boarding passes."

Seal and Dohn want to visit all 49 public libraries by year's end.



Both, recalling how their own lives and that of their children have been enhanced by reading, libraries and librarians, rhapsodized about KCLS and its importance to King County residents.

"There's something about having a book in your hands, and there's something universal about libraries," Dohn said. "They are about people and connection. They are about literacy and lifelong learning. Every library we went to was busy. Libraries make a difference. They absolutely impact people's lives."



# Work Continues beyond Bond to Protect Public's Investment

The conclusion in early 2019 of a \$172 million voter-approved Capital Bond Building Program made King County Library System one of the most beautiful library systems in the country.

The bond measure, passed overwhelmingly by voters in 2004, produced 17 new libraries, expanded 11 libraries, renovated 15 libraries, added a three-level garage plus expanded a parking lot. The footprint of the Library System grew dramatically—almost 30%—and provided community hubs for people to gather and learn, as well as more room for expanded collections, technology, programs and services.

With all the additional space, maintenance of KCLS' capital assets is now the foremost priority for the Facilities Management Services (FMS) department. Completion of the bond projects has given rise to a new phase—the Capital Investment Program (CIP). In 2019 the budget included \$3.94 million for repairs and maintenance to keep all libraries and equipment in working order.

The year 2019 saw the completion of a new ideaX Makerspace at Federal Way Library. In addition, FMS kept busy ensuring the health and safety of buildings and the integrity of public investment in libraries, addressing needs ranging from heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) to roof replacements.

The Bellevue Library received a fire alarm upgrade, an HVAC chiller replacement and new second floor carpeting.

Facilities replaced furniture and carpeting at Fall City, Issaquah, North Bend and Woodmont Libraries, re-stained the exterior of Maple Valley Library and completed exterior painting at Valley View Library.

HVAC rooftop units were also replaced at the Kent and Federal Way Libraries, and the Mercer Island Library received a new HVAC system and a new roof. Designs for a new roof at the Woodinville Library were also completed.

Facilities also installed an Automated Materials Handling (AMH) system at Kingsgate, replaced an HVAC boiler at Redmond and repaved part of Sammamish Library's parking lot.

Another significant project was the new King County Children and Family Justice Center, which includes a library space staffed by KCLS. Facilities installed new furniture and shelving at the Center, formerly called the King County Youth Services Center.

Strong stewardship of taxpayer investments is among KCLS' most important values. The ongoing work of KCLS Facilities and other departments helps ensure the longevity of buildings the public relies upon every day.

