
DATE: July 2, 2020

TO: Library Board, Pima County Public Library

Pima County Board of Supervisors
Pima County Administration
Friends of the Pima County Public Library, Board of Directors
Friends of the Pima-Green Valley Library, Board of Directors
Friends of the Kirk-Bear Canyon Library, Board of Directors
Friends of the Arivaca Library, Board of Directors
Friends of the Oro Valley Public Library, Board of Directors
Pima Library Foundation, Board of Directors

FROM: Karyn Prechtel-Altman
Deputy Library Director

SUBJECT: Public Services and Community Engagement Report – March - May 2020

The library closed to the public in mid-March, and closed to staff at the end of March when the Governor's Stay-at-Home order was announced. The first few weeks of total closure involved managing requests to telecommute, helping staff who were still working to re-tool their work, and attending webinars, discussion groups, and phone calls with other library systems. As time progressed, we learned more about the virus and libraries across the nation began to plan for reopening. PCPL had planned to start with only providing reserves via curbside services, but when the Stay-at-Home order was lifted, the Library was asked to reopen with limited access to computers in addition to checking out reserved books. One of the biggest challenges to reopening is the requirement to take temperatures of the public as they enter the building. This additional 'service point' is intended to be staffed by 2 people at all times and it has been difficult for many of our libraries.

Library Services Manager - Kate DeMeester

During the closure of the libraries, my staff and I worked on several key projects for our Tucson community. First, our Askalibrarian reference services via email continued throughout the library closure. During the month of April, we responded to seven times our usual number of email questions. As soon as possible, we brought back a limited staff to provide bilingual Infoline reference services via telephone. Given that many of our customers may not have easy access to email, we felt this was an especially important service to provide equitable access to information for our entire community.

Food distribution was also an important part of our work while closed. Working through several important partnerships, including the Community Food Bank and the Amphi School District, we were able to provide "Grab and Go Super Snacks" for kids and families at 10 different library locations. Additional cases of shelf stable food were provided by the Community Food Bank and delivered to our community partners serving those experiencing homelessness.

Lastly, many staff made important contributions to sister Pima County departments while the libraries were closed. They helped with a variety of essential services, such as job help and resource navigation. I am incredibly proud of each of them, and received quite a few emails from the departments where they were working praising their skills, professionalism, creativity and flexibility.

Library Services Manager - Sharla Ronstadt

During the past few months, my focus has been on maintaining communications with managers, branch staff and Substitute Librarians during the closure, and assisting managers with re-opening process. While we were closed this included maintaining timecards and helping to answer questions related to the closure, use of leave, telecommuting requests, Furlough questions, etc. I also continued to work and monitor work plans with managers approved for telecommuting. Once we started to plan for re-opening I assisted in organizing virtual planning meetings with my reports, facilitating one all manager virtual meeting.

In the absence of a manager, I took over communications and timesheet management of their branch staff. I assisted in identifying staff interested in working in other county departments during the closure. Once we opened to the public, I visited six libraries and worked in several libraries who needing staffing assistance. This work included taking temperatures, giving out books to customers with holds ready for pickup, being a front door greeter, checking in collections, and helping at the customer service desk.

Also during these many months, I assisted with identifying key statistics and data for us to use as we evaluate and make decisions for continued re-opening

Library Services Manager - Amy Rusk

Along with others on the administrative team, I have been working with the branches in my supervisory line to deal with issues related to leave and furlough, telecommuting, and most recently, everything that goes into reopening libraries for limited services. The managers and librarians with whom I work closely have become accustomed to frequent virtual meetings and phone calls.

I have also been working with Marya Mcquinter, the Director of the University of Arizona's History Collective, and Berlin Loa, the Director of the University of Arizona Knowledge River Program, on a NEH grant that would involve I-School graduate students and staff members on the Kindred, Many Nations, Nuestras Raices and Welcome to America teams. I nominated the Many Nations team for an OCLC Community Engagement award and have been collaborating with a representative from AZPM and representatives from the University of Arizona Poetry Center on a co-sponsored Bilingual Poetry Contest for youth.

Program Manager for Literacy and Connected Learning – Kendra Davey

During the closure, the literacy initiatives staff focused on providing virtual programs for families. We started with Ready, Set, School! PCPL's new school ready program. After researching online programs offered by libraries across the country and looking for best practices for online programming, we redesigned Ready, Set, School! For an online program delivery model. We started Ready, Set, School! in English and Spanish and have had a total of 126 live views and over 3,228 views total. We are excited about reaching families that were staying home to stay safe during the stay home order and also the possibility of reaching more families in the future who may not be able to attend a program at the library due to work and/or family schedule conflicts. We have also been working on messaging for teens and tweens that have been sent out via email to teen card holders. These messages have focused on online homework help and other services that teens need during the school closure time. The final project we have worked on is setting up an online summer reading program and creating Story Sketches as a way for kids to stay connected to reading and learning over the summer.

Several library staff helped with 3D printing personal protective equipment for our community and for library staff. Staff were able to print over 1,000 mask straps. These were provided to staff at the Veteran's Hospital. Library staff also sewed fabric face coverings for library staff. Eight library staff have sewn over 400 masks so far.

Latinx Program Manager – Anna Sanchez

These have been a busy few months for us. We have been creating resource lists (in both English and Spanish) for both our website and Facebook page. A lot of our work has been in ensuring that the Library's message goes out in both English and Spanish to ensure that all community members have access to the information. We have met with other Latinx-serving organizations sharing information about services and programs. We worked with the Main Reference staff to ensure that we had Spanish Speaking staff working on our email reference site, Askalibrarian and later on Infoline. We have worked very hard on our Celebrando Nuestras Raices Facebook page and we have more community engagement as a result.

Program Manager for Workforce and Economic Development – Ken Zambos

With the closure of libraries during March, April, and May, many Pima County Public Library staff were out of work as non-essential employees. I spent the majority of my time, coordinating with County Human Resources, the Community Action Agency, the Sullivan Jackson Employment Center, and other departments, in order to temporarily place library staff in essential positions throughout the County. These efforts supported many Covid-19 related services including efforts at the emergency operations center, the dislocated worker hotline, temperature taking at County locations, and food distribution services. As libraries reopened with limited services in May, I began work to help transition our existing workforce development services to have virtual access in order to continue to support job seekers, small businesses, entrepreneurs, and individuals seeking their high school diplomas.