

WINTER 2022

The Next Chapter



*A tutor and student work together during Homework Help at the Lake City Branch.
(Photo by Anthony Martinez)*

Homework Help brings students back to branches

Popular afterschool program returns in-person to support families

The Lake City Branch was full of students of all ages on a rainy Tuesday evening. Homework Help, the donor-supported afterschool program, was back in-person.

Tim, a longtime Homework Help volunteer tutor, said that demand has been high each evening since the program resumed in September. He recently increased his volunteer time from one to two days a week to keep up with the need.

“I can definitely tell there’s been a big gap” in learning during the pandemic, Tim said. “And here, we help you get caught up.”

Tim was working with Auna and Marayam, two high school students attending the program for the first time. They are seeking to increase their math and chemistry skills, and had heard about Homework Help at school. The students enjoy working with the Homework Help tutors.

“They’re inviting and nice,” Auna said, “and I’m getting work done.”

Students are working hard to make up for the gaps that COVID created. A national assessment released in October recorded the steepest decline in math scores in three decades. Reading skills have fallen dramatically as well.

Nancy Garrett, Teen Services Librarian at the Lake City Branch, said about 25 students come to Homework Help every day. It runs two days a week for three hours at a time with 20 regular volunteers. Homework Help returned to six branches this fall: Columbia, Douglass-Truth, High Point, Lake City, NewHolly, and Rainier Beach, with plans to expand the program next year.

Students spend time on whatever assignments they bring, rotating between tutors if needed. While students are in the branch they take advantage of the public spaces, and connect with community partners, like the Hunger Intervention Program, which offers free afterschool meals.

Ayehu, a mother of three who lives in the neighborhood, has seen a noticeable impact on her kids’ work with the return

CONTINUED INSIDE



Homework Help at the Lake City Branch provides in-person connections and a sense of community for students. (Photo by Anthony Martinez)

of Homework Help. She brought her family to Lake City for afterschool assistance before the pandemic and tried using virtual tutoring the past two years. “This is so much better, in person,” Ayehu said.

Librarians have observed increased demand for virtual options for older students, while the younger students generally prefer in-person assistance. Since late 2020, Seattle students have joined more than 4,000 live one-on-one sessions on Tutor.com, a donor-supported program. Online tutoring has been popular with high school students, English language learners, and those without regular transportation.

The Library plans to keep Tutor.com in place, including sessions in Spanish and Vietnamese, as it expands Homework Help to more branches. This hybrid format gives more students the ability to choose what kind of tutoring works best for them.

Some students grew up with Homework Help and have used it throughout their educational journey. Hermela, a first-year

student at UW Bothell, has been benefitting from the program since second grade. She has missed the in-person connections and sense of community the program creates. She plans to continue using Homework Help for support with her college assignments.

“The tutors here help me understand my work in so many different ways,” Hermela said. “I just love Homework Help.” ■



Homework Help returned to the High Point Branch this fall as well. (Photo by Anthony Martinez)

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Visit spl.org/homework to learn more about Homework Help and how to volunteer. Your gift to the Foundation is an investment in Seattle students. Donate at supportspl.org

Meet your Library staff:

SORAYA SILVERMAN-MONTANO Youth and Family Learning Manager



After 20 years in libraries in Nevada and Oregon, Soraya Silverman-Montano started as The Seattle Public Library’s Youth and Family Learning

Manager earlier this year. She oversees donor-supported programs such as Homework Help, Kaleidoscope Play & Learn, and Learning Buddies, and recently answered a few questions about her work.

(Photo courtesy of Soraya Silverman-Montano)

What are guiding principles that inspire your work in Youth and Family Services at the Library?

My mom was a first-generation immigrant from Malaysia, raising five kids by herself and trying her best to make ends meet. The public library was really the only place we could afford to go as a family. I know through lived experience how much of an impact libraries can have on a person’s life, especially for someone experiencing marginalization. Because of this, I am driven to serve our communities and staff to the greatest extent I’m able but especially those who traditionally have been underserved and marginalized.

Do you have any early observations about community needs for your team’s programming as you’ve stepped into this role?

Community need was already so great pre-pandemic, and has only been exacerbated post-pandemic. There are even less resources available to families and communities as community organizations and services dwindle, either due to lack of funding, inflation, staff burnout and turnover, amongst other reasons.

Pre-pandemic, not all but the majority of Library services centered English-speaking, white patrons, and those who have the means to get to our physical locations. In our organization though, there are some phenomenal programs for youth and their families, such as Raising a Reader, World Language Story Time, and Team Read, that have immense benefit for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and diverse communities. I would love to consider an equity-based model that can help us develop and facilitate all services through similar ideals moving forward.

What’s next for Youth and Family Services, and how has the work evolved?

Online services do help break down accessibility barriers, but what we already knew and was even more clear during the pandemic is that the digital divide for families who lack internet or computer access, and/or the digital literacy skills to access online resources, is massive and only growing. Ideally, we would have a balance of in-person and online programs, as makes the most sense depending on the demographic we’re serving.

We’ve focused on bringing back in-person school-aged and teen programs like Homework Help, Kaleidoscope Play and Learn, and Team Read within the staffing capacity we currently have. As staffing levels and the state of the pandemic improve, we will expand tiered programming and services based on need for youth, teens, young adults, and their families furthest from racial, digital, economic, educational, and social justice. ■

Innovation at the Library: From business to books



Library business services valued at millions of dollars for local entrepreneurs

The Library has always been an engine for economic opportunity in Seattle. Now, thanks to a new tool from the Urban Libraries Council (ULC), we can put a number to that value—nearly \$5 million per year.

According to the ULC Business Value Calculator, the Library provided Seattle with business services worth a market value of \$4.9 million in 2021. These services include research, physical spaces, technology and equipment, and training and education.

Free Library assistance is vital for local entrepreneurs. Around 7 in 10 of those who took advantage of one-on-one services last year were certified women- or minority-owned businesses.

Training and education services include individual sessions with business librarians as well as free legal consultations with the University of Washington Entrepreneurial Law Clinic. The Library also held more than 100 virtual workshops and trainings with community partners in 2021, such as a four-part series for BIPOC entrepreneurs around the business of book publishing. ULC valued these services at \$253,000.

The expansive collection of business books, e-materials, and market research provided \$2.3 million in value. The Library's subscriptions to online databases in particular remove a costly barrier for individual businesspeople. These tools help entrepreneurs build business plans, find funding opportunities, learn new skills or languages, and more.

The Library's spaces and technology were worth a combined \$2.33 million to businesses in 2021. Many entrepreneurs rely on free access to desks, meeting rooms, computers, printers, and the internet. Others check out free Wi-Fi hot spots to help them work at home.

The Library's business services go above and beyond what the Business Value Calculator measured.

For example, the Calculator does not include the value of community partnerships. The Library partnered with 28 community organizations last year on entrepreneurial support.

The Your Next Skill program allows patrons to submit requests to librarians for free, personalized learning plans on any topic. Many ask for help building a resume, preparing for an interview, or other job skills.

The Foundation provided initial pilot funding for the Library to Business program in 2015. Since then, the program has blossomed and now leverages almost \$5 million in value for Seattle each year—and invaluable additional support for equity and economic opportunity for all. ■

Find one-on-one appointments with librarians and lawyers, recordings of workshops, Library to Business podcasts, and many more resources at spl.org/business

New Read-Along books offer enhanced experience for young readers

Reading aloud is key for early literacy. Studies show that seeing and hearing words simultaneously improves vocabulary and reading rates. This is especially important for children with disabilities, English-language learners, and others with barriers to reading.

“Read-Alongs” are MP3-enabled picture books that read aloud at the push of a button. And thanks to donor support, hundreds are now available at Library branches to help more kids listen as they read.

The new Read-Along books have built-in equipment that doesn't require CDs, computers, or even internet access. Readers press play inside the book to start an audio recording as they go through the text. Some are also equipped with “learning mode,” an option to hear questions about the book when they're done reading to build comprehension skills.

It's a great example of how donor support drives innovative new ways to add diverse titles, engage young readers, and expand literacy. The Foundation was able to provide flexible grant funding to the Library during the pandemic to pilot this new format.

The Library hopes to build on its Read-Along success in 2023. A proposed expansion would add approximately 1,000 more Read-Alongs next year, with additional units in Spanish and Chinese, the two highest-used world languages for children's materials. ■

Your continued support will help increase the Read-Along collection and provide more young readers, particularly those facing barriers to literacy, with a new way to read aloud. Help us add 1,000 more next year with a donation today at supportspl.org



Read-Alongs are featured in the children's section of the Central Library. (Photo by Brian Lawrence)



(Left to right) Tessa, Evie, and Luke in one of their favorite places, the children's section at the Lake City Branch. (Photo by Will Livesley-O'Neill)

"This is my favorite library! I like how many books they have, because I love to read, and it's also quiet so I can focus. I like how it's organized too, because it's labeled by what type of book so I know what I want to get."

- EVIE

Meet your fellow donors: the Stevens family

"The pandemic really reinforced how much we need the Library," said Brittany Stevens, sitting with her three children at the Lake City Branch. "It's just been such a relief to be able to come back in."

Luke, Evie, and Tessa were busy exploring the children's section. They come to the branch at least once a week. Before COVID, the siblings often came for Story Time and other Library programs.

Now their main interest is filling their insatiable reading habit. While grateful for digital materials and curbside book bundles offered during the pandemic, they missed the opportunity to explore a wide selection. As Brittany simply put it: "My kids need books!"

Her family's experience over the past two years also made them reassess their giving. They donated intermittently to the Foundation for years, then made the decision to become **Page Turners**—or members of the Foundation's sustaining monthly donor program.

In rethinking her charitable commitments, Brittany reflected on how support for the Library supports her community. Not only does her family enjoy browsing the stacks and taking a break from screen time, but she knows how many others take advantage of free computer access, study spaces, virtual programs, and more. She finds librarians responsive to any question and knowledgeable about any topic.

"It just fits with the values of our family," she said. "We love to read, and we support greater access to information."

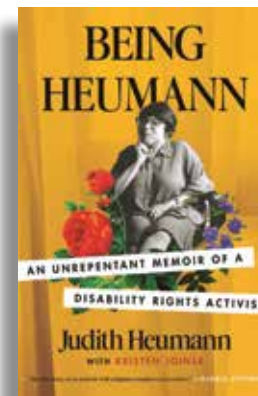
Like many donors, Brittany considers her contribution a fraction of what it would cost to buy new books for her kids. By making a regular monthly contribution, she knows it will go further. While Luke, Evie, and Tessa enjoy a boundless selection of new reading material and programs they love, others will too.

Becoming a Page Turner was an easy way to support a place that has given so much support to Brittany's family and others in her community. ■

You can be a Page Turner, too! Spread your gift over the year to support books and programs all year long. It's a quick, simple, and easy way to support the Library you love. Visit supportspl.org to donate.

Why authors love the Library

Legendary disability rights activist Judy Heumann joined the Foundation virtually before delivering the A. Scott Bullitt Lecture in American History at the Library in August. We heard about her long career advancing civil rights, participation in the award-winning film "Crip Camp," and why she values libraries:



"More than ever, we need to facilitate dialogue in our communities."

Libraries are great places to highlight literature and films, but also to allow people to come forward and discuss issues."

- JUDY HEUMANN

The Seattle Reads citywide book club pick this year was "The House of Broken Angels" by Luis Alberto Urrea. He spoke at the Central Library in October, sharing his personal memories of how libraries influenced him:



"I used to get a stack of books at the Library every Saturday, and I would go home

the richest boy in America, because of my mother's efforts... And she never approved of the books I got. Monster books, racing books—but it was reading. And she would read me Dickens and Mark Twain at night. And now look at me!"

- LUIS ALBERTO URREA

Donors like you, along with support from the Gary and Connie Kunis Foundation, helped bring more than 30 authors to give free public presentations with the Library in the past year. Donations also added more than 100,000 new books and digital materials to the collection. Give today at supportspl.org to continue enriching Seattle's cultural experiences.

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This holiday season is the perfect time to take action in support of your Library. From now until the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve, all gifts will be **MATCHED**—dollar for dollar, up to \$20,000.

That means your tax-deductible year-end contribution is **DOUBLED** when you give now through December 31.

Help us ring in 2023 by enhancing the Library collections, programs, and services that bring so much joy to you and your neighbors. Visit supportspl.org to get your gift matched for the holidays!

You can also make your gift using stocks or marketable securities, or donate from your IRA. If you have any questions about making a gift, call (206) 386-4130 or email foundation@supportspl.org



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