



Westwood Public Library Update
Lizzy McGovern, Library Director
January 22nd, 2024

Library Updates

Adult Services:

We are excited to be fully staffed in the Adult Services Department and are planning a lot of great programs for this winter which will be highlighted in the Winter edition of the Westwood Word. One of the initiatives highlighted in Molly Riportella's bio is her advocacy work which is being supported and encouraged by Library and Town Administration. Please see attached document highlighting Molly Riportella's BiblioUnderground initiative for more detailed information.

Taylor Dodge was officially hired in December as a sub reference librarian. Andy will be facilitating a new Book Club: Books, Balls, and Brews (focusing on sports books and being held at different restaurants and bars in the area). Maryam is doing monthly adult make and takes (currently on 2nd floor but would like to expand to Circ Desk) which have been very popular! We also already had patrons asking for tax forms (have been ordered, but have not yet arrived).

Youth Services

Youth Services has had a busy and productive month with several outreach visits to local preschools and many successful programs that served more than 700 patrons of all ages. We've also had many middle schoolers coming to the library after school, particularly on half-Wednesdays, when we had around 120 kids in the building (last week).

We've also seen an increase in the volume of families using the library as a place to hang out and play since the weather has turned cold. The room is buzzing on the weekends and the play area is always getting a lot of use. Last Sunday, we counted 60 people using the children's room between 2-5pm! Speaking of the busy-ness of the room, we're currently working on training two new library assistant substitutes to help with coverage while Felicia is out on maternity leave and in preparation for a very busy winter season for both kids and teens using our spaces!

We had another fun and busy week in the Children's department. We started out with a cozy drop in craft making winter luminaries on Tuesday. On Wednesday, 62 patrons of all ages joined us for an amazing, high quality, educational program from Wingmasters, who brought 6

live owls with them and taught us about conservation and owl behavior. Thursday we had a unique and charming Shadow Puppets show for our youngest patrons. We closed out the week with a fun, interactive showing of The Greatest Showman.

Islington Branch Library:

- We continue to monitor problem patron behavior incidents at the branch library and are working towards consistent procedures on effectively enforcing Library policies.
- The Warm Reads initiative has started again. The knitters have donated close to 80 hand-knitted items and we will pull names throughout the month. Anyone can enter the drawing every time they visit the branch and can also suggest a book recommendation..
- Registration is open for the popular Book Tasting program. We have it at Neroli and rotate staff to book talk their favorites picks.

Staffing Update

Welcome to Maryam Mallick, our new Adult Services/Reference Librarian. Maryam graduated with a Master's in Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University, and earned her BFA at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Art History. Maryam's professional interests include marketing and publicity and creating innovative programming that teaches people how to access information and engage with the community in order to meet their needs. Her ultimate goal is to promote lifelong learning, and she is always looking for ways to improve the library experience for everyone. Maryam is fluent in Urdu, Hindi, and English. Her hobbies include crafting, reading mysteries and graphic novels, hanging out with friends and family and taking care of her plants.



Professional Development

The Public Library Association conference is this April in Columbus, Ohio. This is a great opportunity for department head staff. There are at least 3 Department Heads interested in attending and I would like to use some State Aid to send them.

Budget

- State Aid award has been granted and we will receive the first payment of 18,831.99 and a second payment in March or April.
- The FY25 Budget was submitted to the Finance Department for review on December 8th 2023. We did ask for additional staffing with a focus on programming for the Children's Department

for FY25. Ideally, 20 hours dedicated to children's programming and another 15 hours for Bookmobile outreach.

In FY25 the Library Bookmobile will be fully operational which will be a huge draw for families, neighborhoods, and school visits. The library needs to expand programming and build staffing for this exciting addition to library services. Both of these needs together equate to one 35-hour full-time Children's Librarian. Throughout the year children, teens and families continue to make up the majority of the people coming in and out of the Westwood Library. The Department routinely serves up to 900 children per month through programming alone, from babies all the way up to high schoolers, at the Main Library and the Branch.

The Children's Department has not had any increase in staffing in over 10 years. In fact, in the move to the new library in 2013, there was a decrease in staffing hours dedicated to the Children's Department. In the previous building and organizational structure, there was additional part-time staffing that equated to 30 hours. When the new building was opened, all available staffing hours were moved to the Circulation Department. This change has left the Children's Department struggling for coverage especially as the new library draws many and more families. Over the last 10 years, the increased demand for programming, materials, and most especially outreach, has grown exponentially and the current staffing levels cannot keep up.

Specific Benefits: This additional professional librarian role would be primarily focused on programming (expanding preschool programming and assisting with elementary-age programming), participating in outreach visits to preschools, events, and stops of the Bookmobile. Additional staff would let the Department expand programming to all ages including much needed programming for tweens. Outreach is a big part of the Children's department and the Department routinely struggles to have enough staff to make all the school visits in June when we start promoting the Summer Reading Program. This position will also provide regular desk coverage in the busy department, freeing the Department Head to assist the Teen Librarian elsewhere in the building with the large teen population most afternoons.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lizzy McGovern, Library Director