WORCESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION FY20 ANNUAL REPORT







A year ago, I wrote that great cities have great libraries and that statement, even amidst a pandemic, has never been more true.



Now in our 18th year, the Worcester Public Library Foundation remains fortunate to have wonderful partners and colleagues at the Worcester Public Library. Regardless of the challenges thrown at us this year, we work together with the WPL Leadership Team, WPL Board of Directors, Friends of WPL, and the City of Worcester to support, foster and enhance the vitality of the institution. That said, it is my honor to share with you this brief note on the Foundation's fundraising efforts to advance the library.

As you may recall, last year the Foundation launched a \$4.1 million capital campaign entitled "Writing the Next Chapter" in support of an overall \$12.7 million Main Library renovation project. To date, the Foundation has received contributions and commitments to the campaign totaling over \$3.9 million. We are very thankful for the support we have received so far from the community, especially from the Worcester-area philanthropic foundations. We are so appreciative of everyone who has played a part in this campaign's success - from the early community briefings to the steering committee meetings and the groundbreaking - we could not have done it without everyone's efforts and support.

In particular, on behalf the entire WPLF Board of Trustees, I would like to extend our most sincere thanks to Dr. Martha Pappas for her incredible generosity in support of the campaign. When it opens next year, "The Arthur M. and Martha R. Pappas Children's Center" will be an inspiration as well as a destination for young children and families from all across our community.

In addition to the capital campaign, we are very pleased to report that we have raised more than \$100,000 in gifts and pledges during our past fiscal year. This annual support will benefit many outcome-driven programs, initiatives and activities at the Worcester Public Library.

Of course, due to the pandemic, 2020 has presented many challenges, but the WPL workforce has risen to the challenge by enhancing its remote services. From the period July 2020 through October 2020, the library has circulated over 70,600 items through its curbside pickup program, has conducted over 350 youth and adult virtual programs with more than 9,000 in attendance, and has made hundreds of patron appointments for computer and printer use. In the month of October alone, there were over 1,400 sessions of the newly instituted live homework help tutoring service to assist our city's youth with remote learning. These figures help tell the story of the key role that WPL plays in providing access to information and other services to the Worcester community. Our donors make all the difference in the Foundation's ability to provide library patrons with novel and necessary library services. On behalf of the Foundation Board of Trustees, our Corporators and staff, allow me to express our enormous gratitude to the many individuals and organizations that have provided financial support for all of our programs at the Worcester Public Library. Please see the evidence of that generosity within our community in the listing of the donors in this report.

To all our donors, we at the Foundation are so very grateful to you for making the library and its patrons as much your priority as it is ours.

Timothy Loew, President

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Our mission is to enhance the visibility of the Worcester Public Library, and to raise public and private funds to ensure its continued vitality.

BRANCH SPOTLIGHT



GREAT BROOK VALLEY



The Great Brook Valley Branch (GBV) opened its doors for the first time on March 1, 1981 in this busy residential community. Realizing that this neighborhood could benefit from having library services and resources easily accessible, the Worcester Housing Authority donated space on the second floor of a townhouse above the community Daycare Center to house a little public library. In the late 1980s, the library was offered an entire townhouse and relocated to 87 Tacoma Street. In 1993, the library moved next door to its present location at 89 Tacoma Street, which had been renovated and made handicapped accessible. We are grateful for the Worcester Housing Authority's recognition of the need for library services in this community!

For 40 years, the GBV Branch has brought library services to the culturally diverse and multi-generational neighborhood of Great Brook Valley.

The branch offers an array of library services other than just borrowing books, including homework help, answering reference questions, offering internet service, and computer use.

Currently, the branch is staffed by two librarians, Branch Manager Marilyn Rudolph, who has been managing GBV Branch for the last 13 years, but who started at the WPL 22 years ago, and Assistant Missy Cutler, a recent addition to WPL. The GBV librarians mostly welcome kids and teens from the neighborhood throughout the day, although there is material for all ages and everyone is welcome. A huge hit at this branch is the six public computers and two Literacy Stations for the younger set. This branch may be small at only 900 square feet, however, the impact of this public space is immeasurable in this neighborhood!

Although the year was curtailed when the library had to close in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GBV Branch was still able to offer 43 programs in FY 2020, with over 800 attendees! The size of the branch can be challenging when it comes to executing these programs, but a little creative thinking, including setting up folding tables amid the computers and the collection, does the trick. Pre-COVID, in the summer of 2019, this space was also used as a location for the free Summer Food Program, serving close to 800 free lunches on site!



GBV Branch Children's Area

There are exciting things in store for this little library branch in FY 2021. The branch has been offered an opportunity to be housed in a new building which will be constructed as a result of a grant the Worcester Housing Authority has received for the GBV community. Stay tuned for details!

WOOSOX PARTNERSHIP



At a crowded press conference at the Main Library on January 28th, the community joined the Worcester Red Sox organization as they announced the establishment of their club's fundraising arm, the WooSox Foundation, with the Library Foundation being one of their first beneficiaries! In addition to a generous pledge of \$25,000, the WooSox Foundation will help create a "Baseball Book Nook" in the newly renovated library, with members of their organization donating books from their own personal collections. The crowd heard

from Library and Library Foundation representatives, City Manager Edward M. Augustus, Jr., Superintendent Maureen Binienda and other city officials, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, WooSox Chairman and Principal Owner Larry Lucchino, WooSox President Dr. Charles Steinberg, and Red Sox All-Star and Worcester native Rich Gedman. In line with the WooSox Foundation's focus on education, the Worcester Public Schools was the other lucky beneficiary announced that day.

SUMMER READING 2020 – IMAGINE YOUR STORY



The Worcester Public Library's 2020 Summer Reading program rose to the challenge as the librarians had to pivot their plans and conduct the Library's first **all virtual** program. Participants impressed us as children read 61,571 minutes, teens read 13,393 pages and adults read 1,188 books as part of this program! All programs and stories were brought online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summer Reading kicked off on June 19th with a virtual premiere of the award-winning anti-bullying

short film "Snowflake," followed by a live chat with the cast and crew. The kickoff to Summer Reading fun didn't end there, as the next day WPL held a virtual family-friendly live event with Parents' Choice Award-winning performer Davis Bates who dazzled participants with stories about how stars came to be in the sky and how foam came to be in the ocean through music and song.

WPL celebrated a huge milestone in FY 2020, marking 160 years since opening to the public on April 30, 1860. We celebrated remotely by engaging patrons on social media, presenting a reading list of 160 books we love, sharing other things that were happening around the world in 1860 (Abraham Lincoln was elected president!), educating on the history of WPL, and sharing photographs of our Library and our patrons throughout the years.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

This year's theme, "Imagine Your Story," was a homage to fairy tales, mythology, and fantasy and had offerings for adults as well as children and teens. Adult programming included

Many thanks to our 2020 Summer Reading Sponsors: Bob's Discount Furniture, Cornerstone Bank, Country Bank, Office of District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr., Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Price Chopper Golub Foundation, and UniBank.

Facebook Live Fairy Tale Retellings and Read-A-longs, Research Your Family Legends, Tales from a Pandemic: Talking about Stories of Deadly Disease, Nutrition Mythology, and Cooking Myths.

The Australian themed show, *Didgeridoo*, was a huge hit among our children's programs this summer. This high energy show combined music, culture, comedy and character building, all while teaching about Australian culture. Weekly family story times were also popular among the younger crowd. Jeff Belanger from PBS's *New England Legends* spooked our teens as he shared creepy stories and answered ghostly questions. Teens also enjoyed tuning in each week to WPL's four-week comic-making workshop.

This summer, WPL hosted 260 live programs over Zoom and Facebook and there were over 7,700 participants during these programs! Due to COVID-19, WPL was not able to hand out physical rewards. Instead, when patrons advanced a level, they earned a badge and received an inspiring literary-related quote. Children were also encouraged to read by seeing their names displayed on banners outside of the Main Library and the Frances Perkins Branch, as they hit each reading milestone.

By encouraging children, teens and adults to read 20 minutes per day, the Summer Reading program aims to curtail the "summer slide" of academic progress between grade years. Other benefits include encouraging reading to become a lifelong habit, drawing in reluctant readers by activities and incentives, and helping with reading skills. Kudos to our WPL staff for stepping up during this unprecedented time to bring our patrons entertainment, knowledge and normalcy!

WPL RISES TO THE CHALLENGE

On March 16th, the Worcester Public Library shut its doors to the public for the first time in its 160 year history, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the city, country and nation faced this unprecedented crisis, the dedicated WPL workforce knew they had to adapt in order to continue serving the community remotely during this challenging time.

To ensure that everyone could access WPL e-resources and databases, a new service was introduced where temporary library



When asked what they liked best about this year's Summer Reading, one of our patrons responded, "I like that they never stopped. Great effort for keeping the community reading, active, and sane considering the state of our nation's health. It was great variety, too."





cards were offered to Massachusetts residents who did not currently have one. With these cards, patrons were able to explore WPL's digital materials while physical borrowing was unavailable. Anticipating a greater need for eBooks and eAudiobooks, WPL secured an increased selection of these resources for all ages. In addition, WPL also stepped up their virtual programming by offering live streamed daily read a-louds, daily

kids' activities, as well as a daily virtual visit with one of the children's librarians, which included either a story time, activity, or a book recommendation. Weekly Teen Tutorials were conducted on Instagram; virtual book clubs were held; and virtual help desks were offered (via Zoom). Other support services including eBook help, citizenship assistance, technical support, math tutoring, resume and cover letter assistance, nonprofit and grant research, and genealogy research all were offered remotely.

2020 eResources Increase

eBooks **25.25**%

Magazines 9.5%

Videos **256%**

The service never faltered as librarians could be reached by phone, email, social media and live chat through the website. While the librarians were working hard remotely, the facilities crew was reporting to work, cleaning and preparing the buildings to ensure a safe reopening that ensured socially distanced spaces.

Once the stay at home order was lifted and library staff could return to the facility, WPL began offering curbside pickup at the Main Library and eventually offered this service at Frances Perkins, Great Brook Valley, and the *One City, One Library* Branches. This service allows patrons to request items for pick up

at the library. Shortly thereafter, the Main Library launched a soft opening of appointment-based services for access to computers, printers, fax, microfilm searching sessions, and copying services for patrons.

While we all anxiously await a return to normalcy which would enable patrons to browse the collection, a team of public service librarians came up with a creative idea: the Book Bundle. For this service, interested readers fill out a form detailing what types of books they like to read, and subject specialists hand-select titles based on patrons' unique preferences. The personalized books are bundled and ready for curbside pickup and the service is available for all ages! Public library services and resources are needed now more than ever and the WPL staff is certainly rising to the challenge to fulfill the library's mission during these unprecedented times!

Public Service and Talking Book Library staff began a partnership with the Worcester Senior Center to engage and stimulate seniors who are homebound due to the pandemic. Public Services have provided them with weekly posts for their Facebook page to promote all the virtual services offered to the more tech-savvy seniors.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

A CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER!



It was an enjoyable evening at Mercantile Center on October 17, 2019, when close to 200 library supporters gathered to take part in our signature annual fundraising event *A Celebration of Authors*.

Guests mingled, ate, drank and shared their love for literature as four amazing authors took the stage. This year's special guests included **Robin Cook**, author of dozens of best-selling medical thrillers; Worcester native **Jarrett Krosoczka**, noted most recently for his graphic novel *Hey*, *Kiddo* about his life growing up in Worcester; **William Landay**, known for his latest novel *Defending*

Jacob which was made into an Apple TV series and filmed in Worcester; and **Steven Rowley**, whose recent work *Lily and the Octopus*, about a beloved furry friend, has been translated into 19 languages. They kept us entertained as moderator Stephanie Pasha, President of the Worcester Public Library Board of Directors, guided the conversation with her well thought-out questions. Monies raised from the Fund-A-Need helped support the new Children's Room.

Special Guest Olivia Ma, a native of China, also touched our hearts as she shared the ways that the Worcester Public Library positively influenced her as she settled into her new life in Worcester and learned to speak English. Olivia went on to refer to WPL as "her first friend in Worcester" and recounted numerous library programs that she participated in, where she learned valuable skills including coding, crafts, and cooking. It was in the WPL Conversation Class where she met her best friend. We truly felt the impact of WPL and its staff through this special patron.



A special thank you to our sponsors for helping make this event possible: The Kirby Foundation; Abbvie; UniBank; Bartholomew & Company; Bay State Savings Bank; Coghlin Electric; College of the Holy Cross; Consigli Construction Co., Inc.; Fidelity Bank; LLB Architects; Location, Inc.; Markos Jewelers; Quinsigamond Community College; RE/MAX Vision; Saint-Gobain; UMASS Memorial Health Care; Webster Five Foundation; Wegmans; and Charter TV3.

GENEROSITY THAT MAKES AN IMPACT

We are grateful for Clark University, College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute for their ongoing voluntary payments to support the Worcester Public Library. These funds are essential to enhancing and supporting the operations and services of the Worcester Public Library.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER ENHANCES MAIN LIBRARY RENOVATION



Despite a two-month, mandated construction stoppage starting in March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library renovation project resumed in May with new safety protocols in place and is now moving full steam ahead! The project includes the creation of a new entrance on Franklin Street and the enclosure of the covered walkway running along Salem Street. This enclosure is creating 8,000 square feet of additional space to reimagine the first floor, including a new Innovation Center, Teen Space, Friends' Bookstore, audio visual room, New Americans Corner, and quiet study rooms.

A highlight of the project is the relocation of the children's room to the third floor. The new space will be named **The Arthur M. and Martha R. Pappas Children's Center,** honoring two philanthropic leaders in the Worcester community. The relocation of this room creates an opportunity to build a state-of-the-art space that features updated technology, interactive walls and flooring, Worcester-themed elements, and several unique learning experiences for families. Children will be dragging their parents to this exceptional new facility!

With the anticipated completion of the project in the spring of 2021, the Library is planning a virtual grand opening with the hopes that we can celebrate in person when it's safe to do so. While it may be a while until the Main Library is fully open and operating normally, we look forward to sharing the experience with everyone who has helped to make this project a reality.

To support these \$12.7 million in renovation enhancements, the WPLF is in the midst of a capital campaign, *Writing the Next Chapter*, with a goal of \$4.1 million. To date, we have raised over \$3.9 million. For more information or to donate visit wplfoundation.org.

Although Lilly and Libby have been off the road during this time, the Mobile Services team prepared and delivered 24 book collections of approximately 40 items each to 24 Recreation Worcester sites so that reading could be part of this summer youth program. Thank you to the City of Worcester and the College of the Holy Cross for their continued generous annual support of Libby and to the City of Worcester, Quinsigamond Community College, the QCC Foundation,



Worcester State University, the United Way of Central Massachusetts, and the University of Massachusetts Medical School for their support of Lilly.

PARTNERS

WORCESTER TALKING BOOK LIBRARY OFFERS LIFELINE FOR THOSE WITH VISION LOSS



The Worcester Talking Book Library (WTBL), located in the Worcester Public Library's downtown location on Salem Street, was established in 1973. Since then, WTBL has been providing a variety of free materials to residents of Massachusetts who are unable to read traditional print due to vision impairment or physical disability. Digital talking books, large type materials, braille materials, descriptive videos and assistive equipment are just

some of the resources provided with a free membership. The Library is affiliated with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Talking Books on cartridge are played with an easy to use audio player, which is included with the free membership. Patrons may also download books to a phone or tablet using the Braille and Audio Download (BARD). With a collection of over 1.2 million items, the possibilities are endless!

Our Talking Book Library has approximately 3,000 registered users. The majority of these users are in central Massachusetts, however WTBL provides large print materials for the entire state! Lee Anne Hooley, Head of Talking Book Services, loves getting the word out about the services they offer. When asked what most people may not know about WTBL she informed us, "We do not just work with the blind. We also work with folks with low vision and physical conditions that make traditional reading difficult."

Individuals may register to receive free services through WTBL by completing an application that can be found at talkingbook.mywpl.org. For any questions regarding their services, you may contact them at 508-799-1730 or email talkbook@mywpl.org. Schools, libraries, nursing homes, hospitals and institutions that provide services to people with visual or physical disabilities are also eligible to use the Talking Book Library.

The Foundation's Annual Meeting was held on September 19, 2019 at the Main Library. As part of the program, the Dr. Richard E. Greene Founders Award was presented to community leader Warner S. Fletcher in recognition of his commitment to the library renovation project and capital campaign leadership. The Dr. William F. and Betty O'Neil Service Award was presented to Dr. Robert Sorrenti in recognition of his years of dedication and service to the WPL Foundation, the Worcester Public Library, and its constituents. The group was entertained by guest speakers Adam Zand and Greg Peverill-Conti, creators of the Library Land Project, as they told stories of their library-hopping to rate libraries and to raise awareness of the important role libraries play in our communities.



In order to help our city's youth as they have had to adjust to different methods of learning as a result of the pandemic, WPL has offered a free tutoring service for anyone with a Worcester Public Library card. Online help is available from HelpNow's expert tutors seven days a week from 2-11 p.m. Services include: live homework help, writing experts, skill building, language labs, practice tests and more! They will even help with SAT practice and filling out the FAFSA for financial aid! Tools are available

for adult learners as well, including citizenship test practice, Microsoft Office help, career resources, and resume and cover letter assistance.

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