

WORCESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION FY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



WORCESTER



PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOUNDATION

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Since its establishment in 2003, the Worcester Public Library Foundation has been dedicated to making a meaningful impact on our community by supporting the Worcester Public Library. As we begin our 21st year of partnership, the Foundation continues to be incredibly fortunate to collaborate closely with our colleagues at the Library. On behalf of the WPLF Board of Trustees, I want to thank Executive Director Jason Homer for his leadership, as well as the entire WPL team, the dedicated WPL Board of Directors, the Friends of WPL, and the City of Worcester for standing united in support of this wonderful institution. Today, our motivation for advancing the library's mission remains as enthusiastic as ever and I am honored to share this brief update on the Foundation's efforts over the last year to help move the library forward.

As I reflect on the past year, I am reminded of the invaluable and transformative role the public library plays in our community, and am pleased the Foundation has had the privilege of participating in this role. This past year saw many exciting happenings here at WPL: *One City, One Library* turned 10, continuing to expand the library's reach into our neighborhoods; a colorful mural was installed at the Frances Perkins Branch, brightening up the space; new fundraising events, and STEM and literacy programs were held in our newly renovated areas, showing the impact of our successful capital campaign; and a collaboration with the WooSox Foundation and the United Way of Central Massachusetts enabled us to bring an exhibit that honored the late great baseball legend Buck O'Neil to the Main Library. This Annual Report highlights these programs and other outcome-driven initiatives that the Foundation has supported thanks to the generosity of our community.

I am pleased to report that the Foundation has had another successful year, raising more than \$360,000 for the benefit of the Worcester Public Library. Our supporters are integral to our ability to help WPL introduce new and vital library services to patrons. Whether it's financial assistance, time commitment, or sharing your expertise, every contribution makes a difference. We are forever grateful for our supporters and I encourage others to join us in our journey to strengthen WPL's impact. Together, we can make our library the best it can be.

On behalf of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, Corporators, and staff, I extend our profound gratitude to the numerous individuals, foundations, and organizations that have generously supported our work at the Worcester Public Library. The community's commitment is evident in the list of donors included in this report.

Thank you for a remarkable year, and here's to an even brighter future.



Matthew C. Irish
President

Worcester Public Library Foundation



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OUR MISSION

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

NEW COMMUNITY RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

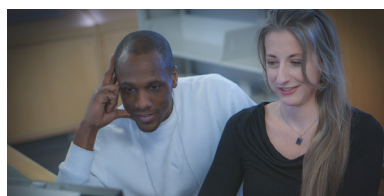
WPL's Community Resources Department is small but mighty! After a decade of librarians unofficially providing similar community services, this department was officially created as part of a library reorganization plan in April of 2023. This dedicated and compassionate team is currently comprised of three staff members: Christina Connolly, Community Resources Manager and Social Services Liaison; Katelyn Duncan, New Americans Librarian; and Kaseem Hargrove, Security Compliance Officer. They work tirelessly to serve the city's underprivileged populations, including immigrants; refugees; ESOL learners; and people experiencing homelessness, poverty, mental health conditions, or substance misuse challenges. Within these populations, the department seeks to support veterans, families, victims of human trafficking or domestic violence, and unsheltered youth by improving and adding services to meet a wide range of needs.



In recent years, the library has become an information hub for people in crisis and the Community Resources Department's focus is to listen to their stories of resilience and survival and adapt services to help people thrive. Often WPL is the first stop for people who are looking to start a life in America, and specifically Worcester. Programs and services such as English and citizenship classes, immigration legal help clinics, online TOEFL preparation courses, Language Exchange, and English Conversation Circles are all offered for free. In addition to all of these offerings, the WPL staff helps ease the transition by speaking 13 different languages!

Community Resources works closely with the City's Health and Human Services department to ensure the WPL staff is knowledgeable and up to date with all the social service resources available in order to connect patrons with the services they need. WPL hosts partnering agencies in a private space to meet with those in need. Outreach staff from different local agencies are available to assist with emergency shelter, housing, benefits, job opportunities, referrals to legal help, mental health resources, and more. In addition to these services, UMass Memorial Health's Road to Care Medical Mobile Clinic visits WPL weekly, offering primary health care visits, screenings, and lab and medication services to those in need. In its first four months, the Community Resources Department has already served over 1,300 people!

An exciting staff addition is in the works for the Community Resources Department. A Library Social Worker (only the third library social worker in all of Massachusetts) will be joining the team in the coming year to work directly with individuals needing social service assistance. Keep an eye on the exciting initiatives coming from this department!

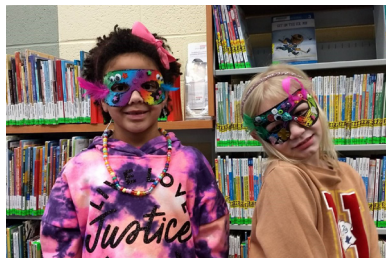


ONE CITY, ONE LIBRARY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS!

Over ten years ago, the City of Worcester, the Worcester Public Library, the Worcester Public Schools, nonprofits dedicated to education and literacy, and the private sector, came together to collaborate on a common goal: improve literacy city-wide and expand access to neighborhood-based public library services. This singular focus galvanized the community and from these efforts, the *One City, One Library* (OCOL) initiative was born. Local businesses provided in-kind services, and organizations provided programming, resources, volunteers, and over \$1.5 million to help open library sites designed to address the unique needs of the neighborhoods and to involve the public in achieving literacy goals.

This dynamic public-private partnership was successful in establishing WPL branches in four of Worcester's elementary schools. On October 30, 2013, the first OCOL Branch opened at Roosevelt Elementary School. The next few years saw the openings of the other three OCOL branches at Tatnuck Magnet Elementary, the Goddard School of Science and Technology, and Burncoat Street Preparatory School.

These branch libraries continue to offer the wealth of resources found at the public library - including new materials, technology, and programs - and bring them into our schools. They are accessible to students and teachers during the school day, and open to the public when school is not in session. This unique collaboration creates exciting opportunities for students and the community to excel at reading and learning. Happy 10th Anniversary OCOL!



ON THE ROAD WITH "LIBBY" AND "LILLY"

"Libby" and "Lilly" are very busy! Together, they visit 31 Worcester Public Elementary Schools, three middle schools, five preschool/Head Start programs, and six after-school programs every four weeks! 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 UMass Chan Medical School for making "Lilly" possible.





COMMUNITY ENCOURAGED TO FIND THEIR VOICE



This year, patrons were encouraged to “Find Your Voice!” by participating in Summer Reading. This theme focused on emphasizing how our voices have power and can be used to share stories, express ourselves, and spark change, while encouraging children, teens and adults to read at least 20 minutes per day.



In June, Summer Reading parties kicked off the program at all seven of our locations. The parties included music, games, crafts, photo booths and even therapy animals! All children and teen patrons that signed up for the program received a coupon for a free ice cream!



In keeping with our theme, our patrons were empowered to make their voices heard by participating in programs and activities throughout the summer. Activities such as sewing, songwriting, and art encouraged participants to create and help express themselves. Character visits were also super popular with families this year; kids got to sing along and hear stories read by their favorites before posing for photos. Favorite visits included Miles Morales: Spiderman and Princess Ariel!



This year our children and teens read 460,833 minutes while our adults read 635,805 minutes! Our kids also completed 946 activities!

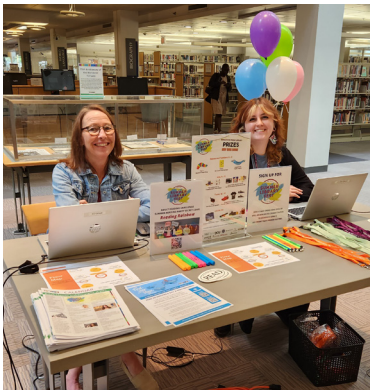
“I like the fact that I’m able to do something I love, and get rewarded for it. All I have to do is read my favorite books, and I get a chance of winning awesome prizes!”

- Summer Reading Participant



Summer Reading concluded with WPL's third annual Block Party in August at the Main Library. Over 2,800 attendees enjoyed fun activities and performances including *Encanto* characters, a dinosaur puppeteer, bubbles, balloon twisting, face painting, henna & glitter tattoos and even a candy bar! Our staff definitely know how to promote reading while creating a memorable and fun time for our participants year after year!

Thanks to our generous sponsors for supporting this program! UniBank, M&T Bank, The Mattina R. Proctor Foundation, Digital Federal Credit Union, Cornerstone Bank, District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.'s Office, Country Bank, Bob's Discount Furniture, Price Chopper's Golub Foundation, bankHometown, and Friends of WPL.



"It was our first time doing the program and we enjoyed logging our books and tracking our time reading, and the prizes!"
- WPL Parent





BUCK O'NEIL'S IMPACT CELEBRATED

In honor of Black History Month, WPL collaborated with the WooSox Foundation and the United Way of Central Massachusetts to bring Worcester its first-ever Negro Leagues Baseball Museum exhibit. For two months, visitors enjoyed the exhibit that highlighted the late baseball legend Buck O'Neil and his inspiring life.



I think that Buck O'Neil would be excited to know that his passion for baseball is on display and is reaching out to a new generation of baseball fans that were not aware of the rich history of the Negro Leagues. I have not yet visited the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, but it's on my bucket list and the fact that this exhibit is an extension of the museum, and it was displayed at Worcester Public Library, gave me the opportunity to bring my grandchildren to the library to see, and it was a pleasure for me.

- Gordon Ward, Local Resident

FRANCES PERKINS BRANCH MURAL & ART WORKSHOP



Thanks to a grant from the Worcester Arts Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Frances Perkins Branch received a new colorful mural in the youth and teen areas! Artist Christian Bachez created the bright and imaginative mural that depicts children pursuing their passions and exploring the world around them. The ribbon cutting included an all-ages art workshop led by Christian. Stop by the Frances Perkins Branch to check it out!



"YOU BELONG HERE" PROJECT

Thanks to a partnership with the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District, we have some exciting things happening on the Salem Street side of the building! Facilitated by Creative Hub Worcester and local artist Sharinna Travieso, we have held six community listening sessions with different organizations to gather input on what it means to "belong." Stay tuned for the unveiling of this project, which will definitely brighten up Salem Street! These sessions were funded thanks to the Commonwealth Places Program created by MassDevelopment.





CELEBRATE OUR LIBRARY!

On November 3rd we welcomed library supporters to our Main Branch for our annual Celebrate Our Library! fundraising event. This was our first year hosting the event in our newly renovated library and we were thrilled to be able to show off our updated spaces!

This year we welcomed authors Ann Leary, *New York Times* bestselling author; Bianca Marais, popular podcast cohost and author; and Jacquelyn Mitchard, author of numerous fiction and non-fiction books. Moderator Stephanie Pasha, current President of the Worcester Public Library Board of Directors, kept everyone engaged and smiling, once again, as she guided the authors with her thoughtful questions and jovial manner.





We heard from teen patron, Ethan Mitchell, who touched our hearts, and validated the need for teen services by explaining just how important the library is in his life. He mentioned his love for library programs like Artivism and Creator Studio, which have helped him develop his own art around what is important to him. The evening also included the presentation of the 2022 Dr. Richard E. Greene Founders Award to Mark and Jan Fuller to honor them for their generous support of WPL over the years, including their recent support of the major renovations of the Main Library.



We are grateful to our sponsors for helping to make this event such a success: AbbVie, Bartholomew & Company, Inc., Bay State Savings Bank, Clark University, Coghlin Electrical Contractors, Inc., College of the Holy Cross, Consigli Construction Co., Inc., Fidelity Bank, Fontaine Community Foundation, The Kirby Foundation, LLB Architects, Markos Jewelers, Reliant Medical Group, RE/MAX Vision, Saint-Gobain, UMass Memorial Health, UniBank, Webster Five Foundation, Wegmans, Worcester Polytechnic Institute.



ANNUAL MEETING

The Foundation's Annual Meeting was held on September 22nd inside the Arthur M. and Martha R. Pappas Children's Center. During the program, the 2022 Dr. William F. and Betty O'Neil Service Award was presented to Stephanie Pasha for her long-standing generosity and support of the library, including her service as WPL Board President and Board Member. After outgoing Foundation President Tim Loew passed the torch to Matthew Irish, guest speaker, Dr. Matilde Castiel, Commissioner of Health and Human Services for the City of Worcester, discussed her work in our community with those that have been marginalized, and how the public library factors into public health.



MINI GOLF FUN AT WPL!

Our second annual Tee Off for WPL! two day fundraiser was another huge success! Young and old alike had a ball as they played their way through the Main Library that was transformed into an 18-hole mini golf course. Friday night's adult event, Mini Golf After Dark, featured beer and wine from Redemption Rock Brewery and Decanted Wine Trucks, and a diverse selection of delicious food and drinks provided by the latest class of the Worcester Regional Food Hub. Guests also enjoyed live music by Matt & Marty Acoustic Mayhem, raffles, and yard games. Saturday's Family Fun Day welcomed families and patrons of all ages to a day of mini golf fun!

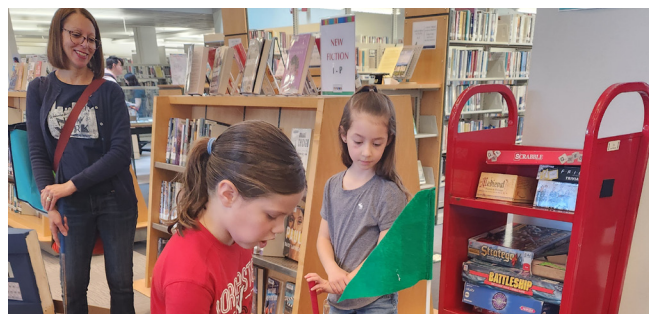




Our generous sponsors were responsible for creatively decorating their mini golf holes – and they sure did step up their game from last year! We called on our guests to vote for the Best Decorated Mini Golf Hole and while there were so many creative entries, the winner was RE/MAX Vision! RE/MAX Vision owner Jeff Burk and Dale Lepage were presented the award trophy, which was made on the 3D printer from our very own Fletcher Family Innovation Center!

We can't wait for our third annual mini golf event next year!

Thank you to our sponsors for their support and creative decorating efforts! Berkshire Bank, Bay State Savings Bank, Middlesex Savings Bank, AllCom Credit Union, Carr Financial, College of the Holy Cross, Coney Island, D.A. Sullivan, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, LEI Corporation, Nexus Financial, O'Neill and Associates, Quinsigamond Community College, RE/MAX Vision, ShiShi's Lounge, Sullivan Group, UMass Chan Medical School, UniBank, WooSox Foundation, Worcester State University, and Robert & Lynda Sorrenti, who dedicated their golf hole to WPL staff.





BLOCK PARTY

Thanks to support from the City of Worcester through the American Rescue Plan Act, WPL hosted its third annual Community Block Party with free activities, giveaways, entertainment, food trucks, and over 60 vendors! Thousands of people came out on a beautiful day to enjoy the fun festivities!



MESSAGE FROM WPL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JASON HOMER



This past year, as a response to the challenges the library world faces and the challenges here within our community, I introduced a reorganization of the Worcester Public Library, to make the work that we do both more efficient and more sustainable. The reorganization achieved a significant milestone with the establishment of our Community Resources Department. This department effectively harnesses the capabilities and knowledge of librarians, along with our

proficiency in disseminating information, to collaborate with specialists in wraparound services. These collaborative efforts are aimed at effectively addressing the diverse needs of our community. The way we produce and access information has fundamentally changed, and I am deeply proud of the terrific team here at WPL who are not only providing information but also providing innovative ideas and initiatives to help make our community better.

However, not every aspect of the library world is something to celebrate. Right now, all over our country, and yes, even here within our community, there are people who are taking issue with some items in libraries, especially items that share stories of traditionally marginalized communities with a particular target on BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ voices. Let me be clear, these individuals seek to ban books and remove them from the shelves of libraries. Luckily, WPL has a strong Board of Directors that recently approved an updated Collection Development Policy with input from library staff. This policy is the most important piece of armor we have to make sure that the materials in WPL are selected by experts, and not those looking to push an agenda or silence voices. The second most important piece of armor is you, the person deeply committed to your library. Without your support, libraries are in danger of budget cuts and threats to staff. But Worcester is a proud city with values rooted in equity and education. I am grateful that here, in Worcester, there are amazing community members who make sure we have the library our city deserves, and I am deeply grateful to have an amazing partner like the WPL Foundation and its supporters for the days ahead.

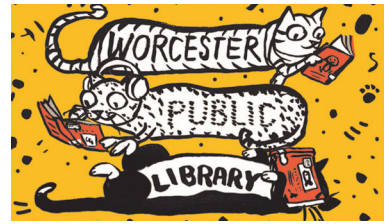
LEGISLATORS ENSURING YOUR RIGHT TO READ

On February 10th, WPL hosted the Massachusetts Library Legislative Breakfast with the theme of *Ensuring Your Right to Read*. Over 120 library related folks gathered at the Main Library to hear both local and state officials, including Congressman James P. McGovern and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, advocate in support of public libraries.



LIBRARY CARD DESIGN CONTEST

WPL's library card design contest in honor of September's National Library Card Sign-up Month was a huge success receiving 277 entries! The winner of the youth category was Azaliyah Ortiz with her reader with an umbrella design. In the teen category, the winner was Elisabet Febo for her manga-style reader design. In the adult category, the winner was K-Fai Steele for her cats reading design. Limited edition library cards featuring these designs were made available to both new and current cardholders for a limited time.



SOFAR SOUNDS

Our recently renovated spaces are perfect for special programs! In September, global music community, Sofar Sounds, hosted an amazing pop-up live concert in our ellipse, featuring three talented musical artists.

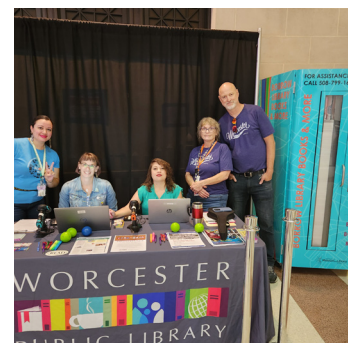
BOOK VENDING MACHINES PROVIDE GREATER ACCESS

This past year saw the unveiling of library book vending machines in three high traffic locations in our City. Thanks to a partnership with the City of Worcester and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, these vending machines were installed at Union Station, YMCA of Central Massachusetts, and the Senior Center to help put books into the hands of members of our community.



IMPACTFUL INSTITUTIONS

Thank you to Clark University, College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The ongoing voluntary payments these institutions make to the City of Worcester are vital to supporting and enhancing the operations and services of the Worcester Public Library.



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