



WORCESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOUNDATION



FY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

A Message from Our Board President

Worcester Public Library Foundation



As we mark the Worcester Public Library Foundation's 23rd year of supporting the Worcester Public Library, I am honored to step into the role of Board President. It is a privilege to build on the work of those who came before me and to help guide the Foundation into its next chapter. This past year has been a powerful reminder of what we can achieve together when a community is united by a shared commitment to knowledge, equity, and access.

My deepest thanks to WPL Executive Director Jason Homer and the entire, remarkable Worcester Public Library team. Your creativity, passion, and tireless service make the library not just a place, but a lifeline for thousands across our city. The many awards you earned this year are a testament to your extraordinary efforts. I am equally grateful to my fellow Foundation Trustees and our Corporators, to the Friends of the Worcester Public Library, and the City of Worcester for your steadfast partnership and support. And of course, heartfelt thanks to our exceptional leader, Christine Murray, the executive director of the WPLF.

I am delighted to share that over the past year, the Foundation raised more than \$360,000 to power a range of impactful initiatives at WPL. These investments strengthened the library's ability to meet the evolving needs of our community and ensure that resources remain available, inclusive, and free for all.

The funds helped bring STEAM programming to life in the Library's Innovation Center through dedicated grants and supported engaging literacy programs for all ages. They contributed to the development of new and enhanced spaces within the library. The Foundation is also proud to continue to play a role in the funding of the Mobile Libraries, which consistently bring vital resources directly into Worcester's neighborhoods.

Looking ahead, our mission remains clear: to advocate for and invest in the Worcester Public Library so it continues to be a beacon of learning, connection, and opportunity for everyone in our city. Public libraries are more than buildings filled with books—they are centers of civic engagement, innovation, and lifelong learning.

On behalf of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, Corporators, and staff, thank you to the many individuals, foundations, and organizations whose generosity powers our work. Your support is reflected in every achievement highlighted in this report—and in the daily impact the library has on the lives of Worcester residents.

In partnership and in gratitude for your generosity and commitment, we look forward to another year of progress, purpose, and shared success to support one of Worcester's finest and most beloved institutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Q. Hunt".

Sue Q. Hunt
President
Worcester Public Library Foundation

Worcester Public Library Foundation

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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.

Behind the Shelves: The Team That Keeps the Library Running Smoothly

Spotlight on Worcester Public Library's Tech Services Department

When you walk into the Worcester Public Library and find exactly the book, audiobook, or movie you were looking for—or something you didn't even know you wanted—you can thank the Tech Services Department.

This team of seven detail-loving staff works mostly behind the scenes, but their efforts are felt in every corner of the library. From the moment a new item is ordered to the moment it hits the shelves, Tech Services makes sure the right materials are available, findable, and ready to be enjoyed. In FY 2025, they cataloged 29,049 items—more than 27,000 books, nearly 1,000 DVDs and Blu-rays, and over 450 audiobooks. That includes 13,000 items for adults and 16,000 for children and teens, building a collection that truly serves the whole community.



Cataloging involves far more than just adding a title to the system. The team carefully reviews and labels every item, ensuring it's categorized and easy to find. It's a mix of librarian-level precision and everyday user-friendliness that makes discovering your next favorite story seamless.

And it's not just books anymore. Tech Services also manages the **Library of Things**, a collection of non-traditional items you can borrow just like a book. Want to try a synthesizer, project your own movie, or borrow a telescope? How about a croquet set, knitting needles, or even a power washer? Thanks to Tech Services, it's all possible—and easy to find in the catalog, whether you're looking for tarot cards or tug-of-war ropes.

"Our team definitely leans nerdy," one staff member jokes. "We love getting the details right—but we also know the most important thing is making it easy for people to find what they need."

From timeless classics to trekking poles, Tech Services is the quiet force behind the library magic that keeps Worcester discovering, creating, and learning.

Reimagining Library Spaces to Meet Community Needs

Over the past year, the Worcester Public Library has continued to evolve, transforming spaces to better reflect how our community engages with them. Informed by user feedback and observation, we made thoughtful changes to our layout and furnishings, introduced new programs and services, and reimaged key areas throughout the library.

To better serve our patrons, several new spaces were created and enhanced. Five study pods were added on the third floor to help meet the high demand for study rooms, providing quiet areas for tutoring, virtual appointments, studying, and small group discussions. A dedicated social worker office was also established, featuring glass walls to balance transparency with privacy, which offers a safe and welcoming space for one-on-one consultations with our Social Services Specialist. In addition, the First Floor Ellipse was enclosed with glass and transformed into a versatile meeting space, further expanding opportunities for collaboration, programming, and engagement.

These updates were designed to enhance functionality, comfort, and accessibility, ensuring our spaces remain vibrant, welcoming, and responsive to the diverse needs of our patrons. From flexible seating to program-friendly layouts, every change was made with the goal of maximizing our impact and enriching the library experience for all.



You Belong Here! Celebration



After more than a year of thoughtful planning, community engagement, and collaborative designing, the vibrant You Belong Here! public art and lighting installation was unveiled on the Salem Street façade of the Main Library.

This inspiring project was made possible through a partnership between the WPL, the WPLF and the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District. It was brought to life through the dedicated efforts of project facilitator Creative Hub Worcester and local artist Sharinna Travieso.

Designed to reflect the powerful theme of belonging, the installation celebrates the rich diversity of Worcester's voices and cultures, offering a welcoming message to all who visit the library and the downtown area.



Celebrating Women's History Month

In April, the Worcester Public Library proudly hosted a special exhibit in honor of Women's History Month at the Main Library. Presented in partnership with the WooSox Foundation and the United Way of Central Massachusetts, *Chasing A Dream – The Story of Girls and Women in Baseball* celebrated the rich, and often overlooked, contributions of women to the sport of baseball.

Spanning more than 150 years of history, the exhibit featured stories, photographs, and artifacts dating from 1859 to 2015. **It offered visitors a compelling look at the perseverance, talent, and impact of girls and women who have helped shape the game, from early pioneers to modern-day trailblazers.** This engaging exhibit not only educated and inspired but also underscored the importance of inclusion and representation in America's pastime.



SummerQuest 2025: Level Up at Your Library!

SummerQuest 2025 invited children, teens, and adults to “level up” at WPL through reading, hands-on activities, and game-like challenges. **This theme focused on play, one of the ways we learn to relate to others, to think in new ways, and to foster friendships, new and old.** Once again, WPL partnered with the community to prevent the summer slide by keeping literacy engaging, interactive, and fun.

This year, participants were invited to complete game boards to win cool prizes. Adults loved the “Woonopoly” challenges, and one of the summer’s most popular attractions for kids was the life-size Candy Land board game adventure in the Pappas Children’s Center. Families loved this sweet twist on a classic favorite!

Other featured programs included an Ice Cream Social where kids could beat the heat with an ice cream treat, Switch it Up where patrons could drop in and play video games with friends on the Nintendo Switch, and Beaded Buddies for children to make their own keychain, along with other creative crafts and DIY activities.

Level Up at Your Library reminded us that libraries are not just a space for knowledge; they are a space for fun! Though summer always goes by quickly, this year’s program was brimming with exciting and meaningful experiences that brought families and friends together.



Special thanks to our generous sponsors who made SummerQuest 2025 possible: **District Attorney Joseph D. Early, Jr.; Bob's Discount Furniture; Cornerstone Bank; Country Bank; Mattina R. Proctor Foundation; Price Chopper's Golub Foundation; UniBank; Walmart; and the Friends of the Worcester Public Library.**

March Meowness 2.0 Returns with Pawsitive Impact

Worcester Public Library's wildly popular, cat-themed campaign, March Meowness, which first captured hearts in 2024, made its triumphant return in 2025 as March Meowness 2.0! This year's initiative built on the success of the original with a purrfect lineup of feline-focused activities and events designed to engage and entertain community members of all ages.

In addition to the fun, March Meowness 2.0 offered a meaningful way to give back. For every cat photo submitted, the WPLF donated \$1 to support summer programming for all ages—turning adorable cat pictures into real impact for our community.



Libby and Lilly Hit the Road

Libby and Lilly Mobile Libraries kept very busy! Together, they visited 31 Worcester Public Elementary Schools, three middle schools, six preschool/Head Start programs, six after-school programs, and 44 community stops, including the EcoTarium, Boys and Girls Club, Friendly House, and Girls, Inc., every four weeks!

Lilly was “born” 11 years ago thanks to support from the **United Way of Central Massachusetts, Quinsigamond Community College, the QCC Foundation, Worcester State University, and the City of Worcester.**

Many thanks to the **College of the Holy Cross** for their continued annual support of Libby since 2012!



Celebrate Our Library!

Book lovers, local leaders, and library supporters gathered on November 14th for a special fundraiser benefiting the Worcester Public Library. Held at the Main Library, the event featured a dynamic author panel with the goal of raising critical funds to support the library's expanding programs and community services.



The evening highlighted the vital role the WPL plays in Worcester by providing free access to books, digital tools, educational programming, and inclusive community spaces. Long-time Worcester resident and library patron, Julius, spoke to this impact, detailing the important role WPL played in his life's transformation.



The evening culminated in a distinguished panel of acclaimed authors—including Jayne Allen, Byron Lane, Courtney Maum, and J. Courtney Sullivan—engaging in lively conversation about their writing journeys, thoughtfully moderated by Stephanie Pasha.



Thank you to the sponsors for making this event a success: **Assumption University; Autism Allies; Bartholomew & Company, Inc.; Bay State Savings Bank; College of the Holy Cross; Consigli Construction Co., Inc.; The Eppinger Family Foundation; Fidelity Bank; Fontaine Community Foundation; The Hanover Insurance Group; The Kirby Foundation; Markos Jewelers; RE/MAX Vision; Saint-Gobain; Sullivan and Sullivan, LLP; UMass Memorial Health; UniBank; Wegmans; and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.**



Annual Meeting



Library friends and supporters came together on September 19th for the Worcester Public Library Foundation's Annual Meeting, an evening dedicated to celebrating leadership, service, and community impact. Attendees welcomed newly elected Board Trustees and expressed gratitude to those concluding their terms.

The evening also honored two remarkable individuals: **Congressman James P. McGovern** received the Dr. Richard E. Greene Founders Award in recognition of his steadfast advocacy for libraries, while longtime supporter **Timothy Loew** was presented with the Dr. William F. and Betty O'Neil Service Award for his enduring commitment to the library's mission.

Guests were treated to a preview of *You Belong Here!*, a vibrant, community-inspired mural that was later installed on Salem Street in partnership with the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District. **The artwork serves as a powerful reminder of the library's role as a welcoming space for all.**

Mini Golf, Maximum Fun – Inside the Library!



In May, we hosted our 4th annual *Tee Off for WPL!* fundraiser—and it was a hole-in-one success! Our sponsors went above and beyond, transforming their mini golf holes into imaginative designs that delighted guests of all ages.



The weekend kicked off with an adults-only evening on Friday, where guests putted their way through the library, enjoying cocktails from Decanted Wine Truck and Mobile Bar, delicious offerings from the Worcester Regional Food Hub, and live music by local favorite J.P. Royer. **Laughter and friendly competition filled the stacks as players navigated the unique course.**

Saturday was all about family fun, welcoming players of all ages to explore the library together while enjoying a round of mini golf. **The day highlighted the library as a space for discovery, creativity, and community connection.**



Event-goers also had the chance to vote for their favorite mini golf hole. This year's award for Best Decorated Hole went to sponsors Virginia Davidson and Stephanie Wallace, whose pollination-themed hole combined creativity with education. Their design truly bloomed—and wowed the crowd!



A special thank you to our Title Sponsor **Berkshire Bank** and Presenting Sponsors **Armed365** and **Middlesex Savings Bank**! And to all of our hole sponsors: **AllCom Credit Union; British Swim School; Clark University; College of the Holy Cross; Coney Island Hot Dogs; Fidelity Bank; Harvard Pilgrim Health Care/Point32 Health; LEI Corporation; Machado Consulting; O'Neill & Associates; Quinsigamond Community College; Robert and Lynda Sorrenti; Stephanie Wallace and Virginia Davidson; UMass Chan Medical School; UniBank; and The WooSox Foundation.**

Fun Festivities at Community Block Party



On a beautiful August day, WPL welcomed thousands of visitors and over 60 vendors and crafters downtown for its fifth annual Community Block Party. Guests enjoyed food trucks, free entertainment, activities, giveaways, and freeze pops on this warm summer day! **This party is more than just a celebration, it highlights WPL's role as a cultural and educational leader, a tradition that brings people together in a place where everyone belongs.**



A Banner Year for WPL

The Worcester Public Library and individual WPL staff members have been very busy being recognized locally, nationally, and globally for all the good they are doing for our community! Take a look at the numerous awards received just this past year!



Library Awards

IFLA PressReader International Marketing Award

WPL was awarded first place for their March Meowness campaign. This award celebrates exceptional library marketing campaigns that showcase innovation, impact, and community engagement.

ALA John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award

The most prestigious award of the American Library Association, WPL's March Meowness was honored for exceptional achievements in strategic communications.

ALA Core PR Xchange Award - External Communications

WPL received an award for the design of the Adult Monthly Events Calendar from Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures, a division of ALA.

Staff Awards

Christina Connolly, WPL Community Resources Manager

YWCA Tribute to Women Katharine F. Erskine Award – for introducing inclusive programs and services for vulnerable individuals seeking refuge at the library.

Linnea Sheldon, WPL Community Relations & Communications Manager

WRRB Thomas S. Green Public Service Award – for her ability to develop creative communication strategies, foster community engagement, and build lasting partnerships.

Jason Homer, WPL Executive Director

Open Sky Safe Homes People of Courage Award – for his tireless advocacy for LGBTQIA+ youth and his commitment to fostering safe, inclusive spaces for all; and *Library Journal* Movers & Shakers: Change Agent – for his bold leadership, commitment to equity, and ability to turn adversity into opportunity.

From WPL Executive Director

What is more important to a community than its library? In times of uncertainty, the Worcester Public Library has become far more than a collection of books, but an essential resource, offering assistance, connection, and hope. As costs rise and families feel the pressure, our role in providing free access to information, technology, programs, and support has never been more essential. And when information, too often manipulated and weaponized, comes at us in an exhausting barrage, the library remains a trusted refuge.



And the numbers reflect this truth: more people than ever are turning to us. Whether they are borrowing eBooks, exploring our Library of Things, attending programs, or accessing reliable resources, our community knows that WPL is here to meet them where they are. This past year, the impact of our work has been felt across Worcester. We brought services directly into neighborhoods through our outreach team, stood strong for intellectual freedom, and ensured that the library remained a trusted space for all. Even in moments of challenge, our team responded with courage and compassion, never retreating from our mission of service.

We also celebrated extraordinary achievements. WPL was honored with the American Library Association's prestigious John Cotton Dana Award, and our March Meowness campaign earned first place for marketing from the International Federation of Library Associations, beating out more than 2.8 million other libraries, many with far larger budgets. These milestones show that Worcester is not only a hub of local innovation, but a leader on the global stage.

None of this would be possible without the Worcester Public Library Foundation. The Foundation ensures that we are not only sustaining the library, but helping it grow stronger. I am especially grateful to Executive Director Chrissy Murray, whose vision and dedication have transformed ambitious ideas into real and lasting impact for our community.

This year has reminded us of the fragile nature of public institutions. The federal squeeze on the Institute of Museum and Library Services, coupled with state and local budget pressures, has created an atmosphere of uncertainty. Yet, in Worcester, we remain hopeful because of you. Our donors and champions. Your generosity sustains not only programs, but also the spirit of innovation and resilience that defines WPL. Because of you, we can continue shaping a brighter, kinder, and more connected community for all.

With gratitude,

The signature of Jason Homer, written in cursive ink.

Jason Homer

Executive Director

Worcester Public Library



WPL Redefines Purpose and Ambition

The Worcester Public Library has embraced an exciting new chapter, one that looks beyond traditional Mission and Vision Statements to focus on transformative experiences for all who walk through its doors. Guided by a newly defined Purpose and Ambition, WPL is setting bold goals that reflect both the evolving needs of Worcester and the limitless potential of its people. At the center of this direction is WPL's Purpose: **"As the heart of the community, we strive to nurture lifelong learning, cultivate knowledge, and champion intellectual freedom."** Its Ambition is equally forward-looking: **"We aim to broaden perspectives, challenge norms, and empower people to reach their fullest potential."**

These commitments, brought to life through programs, services, and the library's new heart-shaped logo, underscore Worcester's identity as the "Heart of the Commonwealth." More importantly, they reaffirm WPL's central role as a place of belonging, growth, and inspiration for the entire community.



Impactful Institutions

Thank you to **Clark University, College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute** for their continued voluntary contributions to support the Worcester Public Library. Their commitment plays a vital role in strengthening WPL's programs, services, and daily operations—enriching our community in many ways.

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