



Library System Report

EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA • PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Regional Library and Heritage Center • Cape Charles Memorial Library • Chincoteague Island Library • Northampton Free Library

March 2024

LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

The Library of Virginia will be joining us on Saturday, April 27th

10:00 a.m. – Digital Resources
11:00 a.m. – Genealogy 101
Noon – Break
1:00 p.m. – Reconstruction

JUSTICE FOR OURSELVES
BLACK VIRGINIANS CLAIM THEIR FREEDOM AFTER SLAVERY
JAMES H. HARRISON, ILLUSTRATED BY MARK HARRISON

THE GO VIRGINIA.GOV

LVA ON THE GO
LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA
WWW.LVA.VIRGINIA.GOV

Partnerships with the Library of Virginia:

- Exhibit: *Strong Men and Strong Women of Virginia, 2023* - Heritage Center Gallery; now through April 27th
- LVA on the Go - April 27, 10am—2pm @ Regional Library and Heritage Center

Presentations:

10am - LVA's Digital Resources

11am - Genealogy 101 - highlighting resources for African American genealogical research @ LVA

1pm - Reconstruction in Virginia highlighting new book: *Justice for Ourselves: Black Virginians Claim Their Freedom after Slavery*

Director's Update



Christopher Pote,
Interim Director

This month we said goodbye to System Director Miranda Wisor. It was bittersweet. Miranda is a good leader with great ideas. We are sad to see her go, but we obviously wish her and her family well on their next phase. That was the bitter part. The sweet part was to look over all that was accomplished under her short tenure. She summarized much of it in her final report but indulge me as I re-hash a few highlights: Northampton Free Library has seen significant increase in programming attendance; we've seen greater community interest in future programming; affiliates in Cape Charles and Chincoteague continue their great services for



DIRECTOR'S UPDATE CONTINUED



their communities; we have made significant technological advances; and last, but certainly not least, we relocated an entire library to open a brand-new library facility and Heritage Center. The last part physically took three weeks, but as Miranda indicated last month, it's just recently that staff feel it's behind us.

So alas, we are in another season of transition. I have been the Heritage Center Manager for a little less than two years, and this month I was appointed Interim System Director. What has struck me most in the first couple of weeks as Interim Director is how much each staff member takes on and accomplishes daily. Everyone carries their weight, and that makes for an amazing team. This was reinforced while reading over the reports from the department heads and affiliate managers in this packet. What each library does on a daily basis, with minimal staffing, is amazing. I am proud to call each and every staff member a colleague and humbled that I was chosen to lead them.

The other thing that stands out for me, now that I must pull myself out of the archives and look around, is the breadth of programming that is offered throughout the system. Just this last month we: smashed rocks, planted seeds, learned about the American Revolution, heard from authors, gamed, wrote creatively, crocheted, told stories, and made window displays. What a remarkable group of activities! (Much of this is discussed in a little more detail further down this report.)



The role of an interim director is tricky. The main responsibility is to keep the ship afloat and pointed in the right direction while not getting in the way. Thank you to the wonderful ESPL staff for all you do and for supporting me these past few weeks. I look forward to rowing alongside you.

Employee Policy Manual

Included again in this Board Packet, you'll find proposed updates to the ESPL Employee Policy Manual. A few months ago, the Board approved updates to section 4.11 Holiday Pay and Emergency Closings and to Appendix B. Dress Guidelines. The Personnel Committee has been working to update the entire manual and it is now ready for wider review. Updates and changes of note include:

- ◆ Section 2.1: Changes to staff evaluation period to align with an annual cycle and establish goal-setting as part of the evaluation process. Current practice has been to enact evaluations on the anniversary of employees' hire date. This has led to inconsistencies in the evaluation process that recommended updates seeks to remedy.
- ◆ Section 4.5: Clarification of health benefits provided to employees of ESPL and align coverage with Accomack County as the fiscal agent of the library and administrative source of health insurance availability. It is recommended that this update be approved to take effect with the start of Fiscal Year 2025.
- ◆ Section 5.1: Reduction in maximum allowable accrual of vacation leave. Vacation time is part of the benefits package afforded to staff and this update attempts to encourage staff to use their leave time. It will further serve to reduce the leave liability of the library system.
- ◆ Section 5.2: Affords supervisors and/or the Director the authority to request a medical release for staff returning to work. This will protect staff returning to work by ensuring that they have been medically cleared to do so and similarly protect colleagues and the library system as a whole.
- ◆ Section 5.4: Expansion of bereavement leave to afford staff the opportunity for leave in the event of the death of an extended family member or non-relative.
- ◆ Other: Additional adjustments have been made throughout the document to provide further clarification to staff in subject areas such as travel reimbursement, grievance procedures, prohibited conduct, and other matters.



Email Updates

ESPL successfully underwent an email migration to a new vendor.



Heritage Center

Christopher Pote, Heritage Center Manager



Jazmine Collins will be authoring the Heritage Center Report while Christopher Pote is in the Director's Office:

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Heritage Center reports successful programming for the month of March 2024. On April 12th, Ted Corbett, author of several books on the Revolutionary War gave a lecture entitled "A Lot Happened on the Virginia Eastern Shore during the American Revolution." Corbett detailed the sentiment of the Eastern Shore



gentry to the Stamp Act in 1765, loyalism and the numerous raids that took place in the two counties, the British offer of freedom to the enslaved, draft riots of 1781, and the Battle of the Barges in 1782. Attendance for this lecture was in the 40s. Corbett has written several titles on Revolutionary Delmarva History, including *A Maritime History of the American Revolutionary War: An Atlantic-Wide Conflict over Independence and Empire*, and *The Promise of Freedom for Slaves Escaping in British Ships: The Emancipation Revolution, 1740-1807*, which are currently our collection. His other titles *No Turning Point: The Saratoga Campaign in Perspective*, *St. Augustine Pirates and Privateers*, *Revolutionary Chestertown: Loyalists and Rebels on Maryland's Eastern Shore* and *Revolutionary New Castle: The Struggle for Independence* are in the process of being added to the collection.

In the same theme of Revolutionary Era history, Kellee Blake's lecture, "INBORN STRENGTH, Accomack Women in the American Revolution" on April 26 saw more than 50 attendees. Blake details some of the insights into the era that can be gleaned from the records of women in this era, such as the hardships faced by Maggie Petit Cropper of Bowman's Folly, wife of John Cropper the Revolutionary War Officer, as detailed in the letters between husband and wife. She also highlights the story of Nancy Johnson, an enslaved woman of Pungoteague who gained freedom by escaping to the British lines and eventually settled in the Nova Scotia community of loyalists as documented in the *Book of Negroes*, a ledger compiled by British military officers. Blake ended the lecture by discussing Mary Sned of Parksley, one of the last 3 living women in the nation to collect a Revolutionary War Pension until her death in 1902 and discussed the national attention and controversial conversation around war pensions that is shown in newspaper articles that mention Sned. Kellee Blake hinted that she will be gathering the stories of about 15 ESVA women into a collected work similar to the play "Stronger the Steel" that composed about Eastern Shore Women in the Civil War us-



Heritage Center

Christopher Pote, Heritage Center Manager



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA
Heritage Center
KELLEE GREEN BLAKE
WILL GIVE A LECTURE ON
INBORN STRENGTH
Accomack Women in the American Revolution
TUESDAY,
3.26.24
6:30PM
Eastern Shore Regional Library & Heritage Center
24313 Bennett St.
Parksley, VA
CONTACT THE HERITAGE CENTER
(757)709-6639 HERITAGE@ESPL.ORG

With the nation's semiquincentennial anniversary on the horizon, Revolutionary Shore history will continue to be a popular topic in programming and discussion such as at the Eastern Shore Museum Network and the Northampton 250 Committee meetings which Heritage Center staff attended in March. The first quarterly meetings for Heritage Center Advisory Committee and the Latimer Working Group were convened this month as well. Programming that has been planned for April will include a lecture on April 4th by Carolyn Adams on the genealogical research of the Adams and Beckett families that she and her late husband conducted for the book *Free-Born: 350 Years of African American history on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Invisible History: Growing up Colored in Cape Charles, Virginia*, previously scheduled for April 26, has been postponed until May.

New titles in the Eastern Shore Room this month include *Resolutions, Laws, and Ordinances, Relating to... Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution* and *Pierce's Register*, official paymaster records of Continental Army. Both of these will be of particular interest to genealogists for the names of the soldiers or their heirs who applied for relief under the terms of each of the special Acts. George N. McMath's *Remembering When: a Collection of Memories about Life on Virginia's Eastern Shore* is also new in the collection as are two new transcriptions by Allen Hamilton of *Northampton County Land Tax Records, 1900, 1905, and 1910*, followed by the years 1920 and 1925 in a separate title.



Technical Services

Charle Ricci, Collection Management and Acquisitions Librarian



Negentropy in the Library



Negentropy is the inverse of entropy and indicates that things are becoming more ordered. It is the opposite of randomness or disorder, implying organization, structure, and function.

Since ESPL moved to the new library facility in Parksley late last summer, significant increases in the numbers of new library cards issued, computer and Wi-Fi sessions, and program attendance have occurred. This rise in the number of people enjoying the new library building has resulted in a similar rise in the use of library materials as well. In fact, there has been a 20 percent increase in the number of items checked out between June and December 2023 when compared to the entire previous fiscal year!

The increased foot traffic, book browsing, and circulation of materials all demonstrate the value of the library to our local community. However, about six months after the new library had opened, library staff noticed that the rise in usage of the collection was becoming evident in the gentle state of disorder in the bookshelves.

Some shelves were overly full, while others had plenty of space but no bookends to keep the books from falling over or leaning precariously at the edge of the shelf. The crowded areas of the collection discouraged browsing because it was difficult to remove and replace items on the shelves. After evaluating the state of the shelves, library staff formed a plan and then reached out to ESPL Friends and Volunteers for assistance.

Currently, a volunteering retired librarian is working closely with ESPL's Collection Management Librarian to identify items in the crowded portions of the fiction collection which are in poor condition, or which have had no circulation activity within the last five years. While it is never easy to withdraw a book from the library collection, many of these items will be passed on to the ESPL Friends' Book Shop or to Better World Books to be purchased by a reader and enjoyed in a home library.

At the same time, a group of ESPL Friends members are carrying out an intensive evaluation of portions of the fiction and nonfiction collections. Not only are these shelves of books being examined to ensure that each item is in the correct order, but large swaths of shelves are undergoing balancing and shifting to ease crowding and to allow room for future growth. Bookends are being added, where needed, to retain order and increase the lifespan of the collection materials.

The project is progressing nicely and is leaving behind a more relevant and usable collection in its wake. ESPL staff are hopeful that the current high level of collection usage will become our new normal, and that the additional volunteer assistance we are receiving will help to keep the library shelves orderly and in a constant state of negentropy.



Programs & Outreach Report

Tiffany Flores

All month long the regional library has been hosting an Easter Egg hunt where an egg is hidden in the kids' section daily. The first child to find the egg gets a prize, and this has been a hit! There has been a lot of excitement around finding the egg which has encouraged children to explore their section of the library. All in all, this has been a



very successful program. Other kids' programming has gone well too. Kid's Yoga is starting to have a few regulars attend the monthly event; Hometown Heroes had 3 kids attend; and the weekly kids' crafts saw a total of 18 attendees. Kids' programming became popular during the week of spring break. Tiffany hopes this will mean that the library's collaboration with Chincoteague Bay Field Station will see more kids on March 28th. Teen programming has also had good attendance for Teen Craft Night, the Creative Writing Club, and Teen Manga Night had 1 attendee. On Teen Manga night, for example,

Tiffany and Tim Hall were able to discuss manga and anime interests and hold conversations about the manga participants were interested in. This month's adult programming has gone well, too. In this month's Tech Help, Brian Simpkins was able to help a woman transfer important photos off her phone. The Cat Bookmark Craft led by Maria Burns had 5 attendees who left pleased with the craft. All the lectures that occurred this month had good attendance.

Northampton Free Library also saw good results with programming throughout the month. Tech Help Tuesdays continue to be popular with adult patrons. There was a lot of interest in the adult Terrarium craft that occurred on March 28th. Registration for this event filled up very quickly. And NFL had 8 children attend this month's STEM program.





Programs & Outreach Report Continued...

Tiffany Flores

With warmer weather well underway, outreach requests have begun to roll in. Throughout March, The Eastern Shore Public Library has made plans to attend a few in April. And we are glad to welcome to Parksley the Library of Virginia for their On the Go programming on Saturday, April 27. As we get closer to summer, the library will receive a lot more requests for outreach and attend as many as possible. Additionally, as school gets closer to wrapping up for the year, teachers are requesting field trips and school visits to encourage students to use the library. There are already a few field trips in the works. These will be used as an opportunity to advertise Summer Reading Programming.

STEM programming was a hit in March! As expected, Geode Smashing is a smash with children. Both the Parksley Library and the Nassawadox Library had 8 patrons attend with a total of 16 participants. At this event, participants could put on their safety goggles and smack open a geode which they then got to keep. Every kid left excited and happy. The regular meetings for the STEM Coop grant continue to go well and all ESVA libraries plan to meet to discuss progress on the Circulating STEM kits.





Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



March was one of Northampton Free Library's most successful months for programming to date. The library offered Storytime Anytime all day on Mondays and Wednesdays and offered all-day technology help on Tuesdays. Both of these will continue to be offered throughout the month of April. March's most popular programs were a geode-smashing STEM activity for children and a terrarium-building craft for adults. Both programs were well attended and patrons of all ages had fun making a mess with hammers, goggles, jars, and potting mix. Attendees to the geode program were also able to take home instructions for growing their own crystal geodes using egg shells at home.



Northampton Free Library also enjoyed a visit by local children's book author and illustrator Nan Carlton on Saturday, March 23rd. Ms. Carlton offered a public reading of her book and an arts & crafts activity in the style of her personal illustrations.



The library is also partnering with the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners on a revolving series of gardening-themed book displays. Items from the library's collection focusing on gardening, wildlife, and springtime themes are on display along with free-to-take instructional materials created by the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners, the Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the United States Department of Agriculture.



The month of April will see even more exciting public programs for all ages. In addition the ongoing Storytime Anytime and Tech Help Tuesdays, the library will host a children's STEM craft on Thursday, April 4th at 6 PM. Attendees will be able to construct viewing boxes in order to have another way to safely enjoy the upcoming solar eclipse. Advance signup will be required for this event – more information will be posted to Northampton Free Library's Facebook page. The following Thursday, April 11th, NFL will host an adult craft activity at 5 PM. Attendees will



be invited to create recycled book page wreaths like the one hanging on the library's front door – painted up like sunflowers to fit the season. Advance signup will also be required for this event. On Thursday, April 18th, the library will host another Bedtime Storytime at 7PM. Kids are invited to join library staff for stories and free snacks. Finally, there will be another adult craft activity on Thursday, April 25th at 6PM. In celebration of national poetry month, patrons will be invited to create blackout poems using recycled books from the library's collection. Watch the Northampton Free Library Facebook page for more information about all of next month's upcoming events.



Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



March was another busy month, full of planning and excitement for Spring to arrive!



Staff have been working with our Seed Cart, diligently ordering seeds and preparing seed packets for giveaway. Weekly book displays have been highlighting herbs and flower and vegetable gardening. A few lucky patrons were able to take-away a free packet of seeds with their book check-out. Stay tuned for updates as we plan to have our Seed Cart ready to roll by mid-April.

Another fun project we have been planning is for Earth Day. Using funds from a Department of Environmental Quality grant, staff purchased some wonderful items to educate and encourage us all to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. We will have book displays, offer passive programs for all visitors to participate in, and have some earth friendly gifts to share.

The main attraction of March (hands down!) was the inflatable planetarium. Per library assistant Betsy Doherty, "Cape Charles Memorial Library, the Town of Cape Charles, and the Northampton YMCA collaborated to bring the first ever inflatable planetarium to the Eastern Shore for a one day show on March 20th. It is a real planetarium that is shown on the ceiling of what is similar to a very large dome tent. The planetarium is designed as an educational program and is most often found in schools. The planetarium belongs to Mobil Ed, a company out of Michigan and is handled by Mr. Ty, an educational presenter from Philadelphia. Mr. Ty got up at 3 a.m. to be here in Cape Charles for the event. He gave 7 awesome presentations about space to several groups, including students from Kiptopeke Elementary, Cape Charles Christian



School, Broadwater Academy, Pungoteague Elementary, multiple home school families, and several curious adults. Uniformly, guest exited the planetarium with a smile and good reviews."

Happy Spring!



Chincoteague Island Library

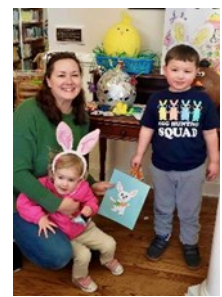
Linda Ryan, for the Board of Directors



Our part-time staff, volunteers, and board members are busy planning for upcoming spring and summer programs. In the meantime, we have had a hectic month serving our patrons and visitors. We participated again in the Downtown Merchants' "Search for the Shamrocks" held Friday, March 15 from 4 to 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 16 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Over five hundred people came into the library—many of whom bought basket raffle tickets, used books and puzzles. A special "thank you" to Teresa, Harriet, Jakob, and Aaron for helping.



Tales 4 Tots Storytime: Storytime for March always begins with a celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday. This month, we combined Dr. Seuss stories with counting. After reading the stories, children made books with numbers and Dr. Seuss stickers. Our next theme was "The color green." After listening to a story about the big green monster, children made a green monster puppet. The following week, our theme was "Bunnies," with many fun stories and crafts. Twenty-three children attended each week.



Book and Window Displays: Women's History Month and Saint Patrick's Day were both highlighted in March with book displays. Our windows focused on both these events as well as watermen, and Easter. Thanks to the Chincoteague Elementary School classes, we were able to display their beautiful and imaginative paper mâché eggs both in our window and around the library.

Upcoming Programs: On April 8 at 1:30 p.m., the library will be hosting a solar eclipse event. There will be special glasses available for attendees as well as fact sheets and temporary eclipse tattoos for the children.

Our volunteers will be honored at an afternoon tea at the Channel Bass Inn, Chincoteague, on Monday, April 15 from 3 – 5 p.m.