



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



Upcoming January Highlights Eastern Shore Public Library System

- 3rd: STEM Party - ESRL
- 8th: Sci-Phi Lecture - ESRL
- 8th: New Year's Resolution Cards - ESRL
- 13th: Teen Game Night - ESRL
- 15th: Teen Creative Writing - ESRL
- 16th: Makerspace Training - ESRL
- 19th: LIBRARIES CLOSED-MLK Commemoration
- 22nd: Kid's Winter Craft Party - ESRL
- 23rd: Adult Craft, Winter Cross-Stitch - ESRL
- 29th: Movie Night - ESRL
- 31st: Annual Puzzle Competition - ESRL
- Tech Help: Every Wednesday - NFL
- Ancestry Help: Every Wednesday - ESRL
- Heritage Center Reference Assistance:
Every Thursday - NFL
- Storytime Anytime: Every Monday &
Wednesday - NFL

For times & more information: espl.org; (757) 787-3400

CIL = Chincoteague Island Library

CCML = Cape Charles Memorial Library

ESRL = ESVA Regional Library & Heritage Center

NFL = Northampton Free Library

December 2025

Director's Update



Christopher Pote,
System Director

2025 was a great year for the Eastern Shore Public Library System. Residents now have access to even more books, magazines, video games, streaming services, etc. than ever before and attended more programming than the past. We offer materials, e-resources, and streaming options in English and Spanish, and we are actively growing our Haitian Creole materials. All FREE with your library card. Thank you to our patrons that utilize our services. Thank you to the citizens and county supervisors for supporting our mission. And thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to the amazing ESPL staff that make it all happen.



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA

Heritage Center

esplheritage.org

Jazmine Collins, Reference Manager & Local History

With the Heritage Center's search term database mostly completed, Archivist Luke Kelly has shifted his focus to cataloging our holdings into Proficio. The first collection at the top of his priority list is the Kirk Mariner Collection. The collection is composed of more than 300 linear feet of books, periodicals, photographs, postcards, binders, and manuscripts collected by one of the Shore's foremost historians. Being able to safely store and preserve the collection was one of the driving factors for the creation of the Heritage Center. The collection is available to researchers by request and is a frequent go-to for Heritage Center staff when helping patrons. Once the collection is fully cataloged, however, it will be widely accessible to all patrons. Mariner's organization of his collection was meticulously arranged and catalogued by himself using index cards. Heritage Center staff have maintained Mariner's organization and are translating it into Proficio. Much of the search term database was built on subject terms that Mariner used for his collection.

So far, Mariner's rare books and subject files have been cataloged. The rare books series includes books about the religious history of the Eastern Shore and historic books written by locals and visitors of the Shore that are now hard to find. Currently, manuscripts are being entered into Proficio. Once done, the archivist will make his way to the next series of items in the Mariner Collection. Later this year, researchers will be able to browse the full scope of Mariner's research, as well as several other collections that the Heritage Center has been entrusted to preserve for our community.

Heritage Center staff are reviewing end of year statistics, to include programming attendance, reference assistance, materials usage, and additions. Over 50 items have been added to the archives in 2025 along with several additions to existing collections and 70 new titles have been added to the Eastern Shore Room Collection. Many of these are from Kirk Mariner's collection and changes in shelving arrangement are planned for the Eastern Shore Room. The Eastern Shore Room's fiction section will be moved into the archive's and added to the Heritage Center Preservation Copy collection. Duplicate copies of common reference items like census and court records will be moved from our storage collection placed in together on the shelf for easy access much like previously done in the Accomack building.

The Heritage Center has also acquired a ClearClick HD Video Capture device which will be utilized in the Memory Lab for converting VCR to digital video. This device should be available for use in late January. A second device is being considered for ESPL's Library of Things. The Heritage Center is also planning for the Eastern Shore Black History Month Trivia Tournament. Preliminary contests should take place in early February with the final contest scheduled for Saturday, February 21. Questions for this year's tournament center around Francis Bibbins Latimer's *Landmarks*.



Coming Soon - Circulating STEM Kits for Children!

In late 2023, each of the four ESPL branches and affiliates received a generous grant from the Virginia Partnership for Out of School Time (VPOST) to build circulating STEM kits. If you're not familiar with the term STEM, it stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, and is an essential component of a child's education. Hands-on experiences help young people build confidence and interest in STEM fields, and reinforce important 21st century skills. During 2024, several other ESPL staff members and I attended monthly meetings with VPOST to learn about educational strategies and programming for early elementary-aged children and then set about building STEM themed kits featuring books, toys, and games.

There are currently seventeen kits in process for the libraries in Parksley and Nassawadox, and Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island Library will also be building STEM kits. "Color and Light", "Gravity", "Robots and Coding", "Cardboard Construction", and "Dinosaurs" are just a few of the kits that are nearing completion. Each of the kits includes books related to the kit's theme as well as interactive, hands-on activities.

During the final stages of preparing the kits for circulation, library staff have been focusing on labeling, organizing, and packaging the contents of each kit. In order to ensure that each kit's contents will be easy for families to keep track of and return intact and ready for the next checkout, staff are creating visual laminated content lists and instructions for parents to reference. Items in each kit are receiving STEM labels and being packaged in durable pouches and totes to support the longevity of each kit. Careful consideration is also being given to how each item will be inventoried when returned by patrons, to minimize additional work for circulation staff.

We will have a soft roll out of the STEM kits at the libraries in Parksley and Nassawadox over the next couple of months and test our procedures and packaging as the kits begin to circulate. In early spring, we then plan to hold a STEM kit kickoff event with other local STEM-related organizations. We will invite local families to attend, to try out some of the kits, and, if they wish, to check out a kit to enjoy at home.

While this project has been complex and has required staff to develop new methods of cataloging, processing, and preparing non-traditional library materials, we are very excited to share these science-based kits with our community. We are also tremendously grateful to VPOST for making this project possible through both funding and educational support. In addition, we feel certain that the knowledge and experience we have built throughout this endeavor will serve us well as we begin preparing for our next major project: creating a circulating Library of Things.





Programs & Outreach Report

Tiffany Flores, Programs and Outreach Librarian

The Makerspace has been the focus all year but especially throughout December. With the policies and procedures in place, Tiffany is finally in a spot to begin training staff and patrons on the equipment. The Regional Library is now offering two training sessions a month for patrons to attend and learn equipment. During December 10th Staff Training, Tiffany led a presentation on the Makerspace, its procedures, and the system of operations for training and managing the space. Staff were able to ask questions about the space and were well receptive to the procedures. In addition, staff were able to explore the Makerspace, learn the button press, and the Brother ScanNCut, as well. Staff seemed to really enjoy the ability to be creative and made all sorts of buttons. As it is right now, the Makerspace is ready to use.



While the winter season makes programming challenging, there have been some really cool events in the library. On December 17th, the library celebrated Jane Austen's 250th Birthday with a tea party! Eight people attended and ate cucumber sandwiches, blended their own tea, decorated bonnets, and pinned the 'hand flex' on Mr. Darcy. This was a wonderfully receptive event with good cheer and creatively decorated bonnets. Additionally, Teen Creative Writing has seen an uptick in participation with five participants this month. Finally, our weekly Teen Gaming Nights often become a place full of boisterous laughter and freedom to play. This often results in the teens decorating the space, being creative, and expressing themselves. On December 16th, this meant the teens elected a new mascot! Introducing Moobles, the cow! This fuzzy fellow now lives in the teen section as the teen appointed mascot.



On December 20th, Tiffany attended the Holiday Hope and Help and Resource Fair hosted by Telamon; an organization built to support and empower families. Tiffany attended with a plethora of information, Spanish language books, and



free giveaways. Because Telamon works closely with Hispanic families this served as a great opportunity to distribute information to them. 59 participants attended and received winter coats from Telamon and visited the vendor booths, saw Santa, and enjoyed treats. As a smaller event this allowed deeper connection and more casual conversation among attendees about what they can get out of a library card. This included much excitement about Creativebug, Kanopy, and Libby.



Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



Northampton Free Library had a couple of snow days in December, but still put on our usual slate of public programs. We started the month with a wintry story-time and snack on December 4th, then welcomed our adult patrons back for another craft night on December 11th. This time, we made polymer clay earrings. Kids were invited back again the following week to make their own tree ornaments with air-dry clay and watercolor paints. Attendees took home colorful angels, stars, gingerbread men and Christmas trees and enjoyed a cookie too. Tech Help was also offered on every Wednesday.

The library's entrance featured a Christmas tree provided by the Friends of Northampton Free Library, decorated with ornaments made by patrons and staff during previous craft nights.



Northampton Free Library will ring in the new year with a slightly altered schedule of public programs. For the first time, the month of January will feature two kids' craft nights. The first will take place on Thursday, January 8th and will start at 4:30 PM. Stop by to enjoy a snack and make your own paper plate penguin to take home! The following week the library will host our adult craft on Thursday, January 15th starting at 6:00 PM. This time we'll be making tea light candle holders. This program is free, but space is limited and sign up is required. Finally, Northampton Free Library will host our second kids' craft night of the month on Thursday, January 22nd. We'll be making festive winter hats and will get started at 6:00 PM. Sign up is not required for our youth programs. Tech Help will continue to be offered on every Wednesday through the month of January. You can get technology assistance all day long by asking at the front desk.

Northampton Free Library will be closed on Thursday, January 1st in observance of New Year's Day and on Monday, January 19th in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.



Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



With ongoing construction, snowy weather, and holidays, the Cape Charles Memorial Library had a brief month of being open to the public. The CCML staff and I want to extend our thanks for the understanding and patience of our patrons. We're also grateful to Northampton Free Library and ESVA Regional Library for their support during our recent closure.



Full house at CCML



Festive Friday 2025 at Cape Charles Memorial Library

Despite December being a shorter month, we still managed to create a festive and lively atmosphere for our patrons to explore the stacks, have documents notarized, or take advantage of our free Wi-Fi. Additionally, the CCML staff and I took part in Festive Fridays, a beloved annual event in Cape Charles, providing a cozy space for families and children to enjoy holiday crafts. Over two Friday evenings, we welcomed more than 500 visitors to the library's festivities! This achievement wouldn't have been possible without the support of our Library Board,



Family Bingo

our Friends group, and several enthusiastic students from Northampton High School.

This past summer, we hosted a Family Bingo program that garnered a lot of interest. By popular demand, we brought it back this month! The program is open to participants of all ages and skill levels. We

intend to make this a monthly event, as it's a fantastic way for the community to come together and have some fun. A special thanks to Councilperson Paul Grossman for stepping up as our caller.

Wishing you a joyful and healthy new year ahead!



Happy New Year from the staff at Cape Charles Memorial Library

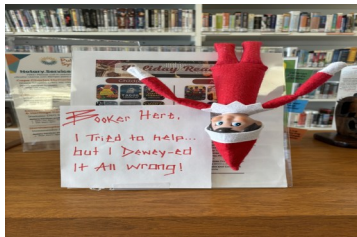


Chincoteague Island Library

Teresa Wright, Library Manager



The month of December the library was all decked out with holiday decorations and Christmas cheer. The Elf on the Shelf roamed the library every night and turned up in the strangest places.



Adult Programs: In addition to our two monthly book clubs, and writers group, we have added a stitching group called the **Saltwater Stitchers** which has become hugely popular, and a once monthly Saturday craft workshop that has also become very popular. We will begin a crochet club in January.



Local authors Nabil and Mary Khouri shared stories of their lives spent in the Middle East from their books "**The Young Terrorist**" and "**Veiled Horizons**" on the 16th. It was a packed house.

Tales 4 Tots: Tales 4 Tots was very exciting with a visit from Santa, great stories, and a holiday party with lots of singing and dancing!



Maintenance & Improvements: The board hired a contractor to install a new light over the circulation desk and upgrade the electric in the front room. The yearly elevator and fire alarm inspections have been completed. A refrigerator has also been added for staff and volunteers to store lunches and drinks in.

Upcoming events: A volunteer brunch is scheduled for Thursday January 8th, **Astronomy Night** with **NASA Solar System Ambassador** Daniel McGill will happen on January 9th from 6:00pm– 8:00pm.