



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

February 2026

Director's Update



Christopher Pote,
System Director

February is budget and annual review season. ESPL made FY27 budget requests before both the Accomack and Northampton County Supervisors. I asked for modest increases in operating funds to offset increases in materials, supplies, and insurance. To be able to talk about the wonderful services and staff of the library in front of the Supervisors is a great privilege. And as we wrap up the annual reviews of all ESPL staff, I am happy to be able to continue to report that we have an amazing group of people working with us, and they strive to best serve the communities of the Eastern Shore, and for that, I am most grateful.



Upcoming March Highlights Eastern Shore Public Library System

- 12th Khouri Authors Lecture - ESRL
- 12th Adult Craft: Springtime Bonnets - NFL
- 14th STEM Party - ESRL
- 17th HC Lecture: Intro to Ancestry - ESRL
- 19th Makerspace Training: Huion Art Tablet - ESRL
- 21st Intro to Pollinator Gardens - NFL
- **23rd Libraries Closed for Staff Training**
- 26th Family Movie Night: *Turning Red* [PG]
- 28th 'I'd Propagate That!' Cuttings Swap - ESRL
- 31st Teen Gaming Night - 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



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA

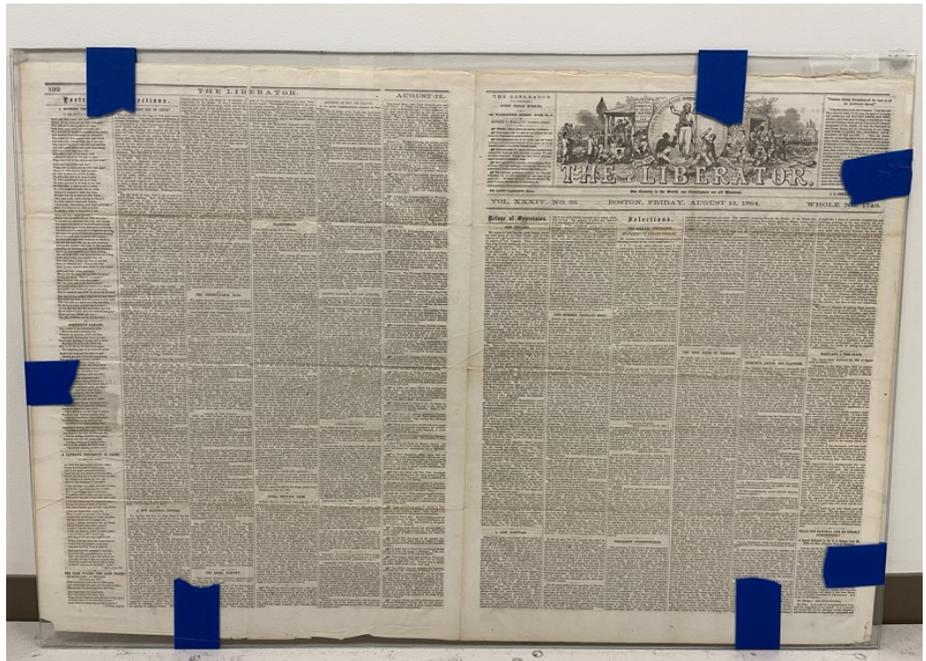
Heritage Center

esplheritage.org

Jazmine Collins, Reference Manager & Local History

Work continued in February towards cataloging the Kirk Mariner Collection. Over one hundred manuscripts from the collection have been cataloged so far. Currently, cataloging is being completed on Mariner's collection of nearly eighty framed and oversized historic documents, photographs, and local artwork.

Visitors to the Regional Library and Heritage Center in Parkersley will likely be familiar with some of the items from the collection. Maps from the collection were displayed last year as part of the exhibit "A Selection of Eastern Shore Maps," including a map of Franklin City, VA and Emanuel Bowen's "A New and Accurate Map of Virginia & Maryland." Before that exhibit the gallery wall was lined with highlights from the collection such as a drawing of Joshua Thomas preaching to the British Army on Tangier Island and a poster advertising Elizabeth Taylor and John Warner visiting the Eastern Shore.



There are still items from this part of Mariner's collection that have yet to be displayed or shown to the public. That will soon change with the implementation of the Heritage Center's online catalog. One of the outstanding pieces that has yet to be displayed is an issue of the *Liberator* by William Lloyd Garrison from August 12, 1864. One of the articles discusses the abolishment of slavery in Maryland, and another touts Delaware as a growing agricultural land of opportunity.

Jenean Hall shared an entertaining story from her research into and transcription of Thomas Cable's letters in her lecture, 'A Very Plain Demonstration of her Malice,' on Tuesday February 17th. Using the selected letters, which detailed a dispute between Thomas Cable and his wife and another Northampton County family, Hall presented a unique window into social life in 18th century, Eyreville, and the familial connections in the county.

The Black History Trivia Tournament practice rounds were canceled due to the weather and team registration has been extended until March 12th. A display of items from the Francis Bibbins Latimer Collection detailing African American Lodges is exhibited in the Eastern Shore Room. The *Indigenous Perspectives* traveling display is in the Heritage Center corridor and will be on display until April 4th. This display also features an interactive panel of oral history interviews.



Reserving Items in Advance - Now Even More to Choose From!

During the recent slowdown in book order shipments from our vendors, library staff worked hard to ensure that local readers could place reserves on delayed or soon-to-be released items in advance. In so doing, library patrons could save their place in the reserve queue well before the title arrived at the library. In addition to entering catalog records for the books featured on our popular Upcoming Bestsellers lists, staff began a new practice of entering catalog records for nearly all items that had been ordered, which meant that hundreds of items that would be arriving soon were now available for reserve.

This was a manual process, requiring a bibliographic search, selection, and upload into the library software for each record. While a somewhat tedious task, staff understood the importance of continuing to provide patrons with the opportunity of reserving items in preparation for the time when book orders began arriving in bulk.

After three months of implementing this input of a larger number of pre-release catalog records, the data clearly showed that the effort had been worthwhile. Compared to the same three month time period a year ago, library patrons requested **397** more items when provided with a greater selection to choose from. Plus, when the pre-release records were analyzed, **43 percent** of them had reserves placed on them!

COMING SOON



Book shipments have now been arriving regularly and as staff return to their normal workflows, we wanted to continue inputting the larger numbers of pre-release records, but also wanted to do so more efficiently. By coordinating with our book vendors and our library software provider, we were able to implement an automated process through which we can upload an entire order's worth of records in one batch. This streamlined process will allow us to continue to offer patrons the widest selection of titles to reserve while also freeing up staff time to carry out other tasks.

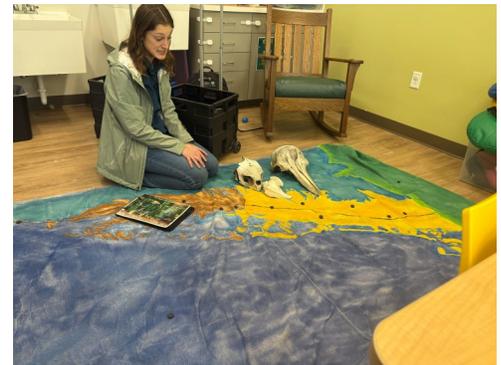
It is our hope that pre-release patron request numbers will continue to grow as local readers are able to find more of their favorite reads in the catalog well in advance of publication dates. The current list of "Coming Soon" pre-release records can be found on the library catalog's homepage <https://esplva.booksys.net/opac/espl/index.html> by scrolling down just below the large book river of trending and just added items at the top of the screen. By clicking on the cover image of an item of interest in the list, patrons can easily add a reserve for that item to their library account.



Programs & Outreach Report

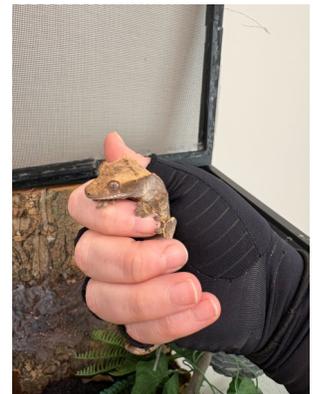
Tiffany Flores, Programs and Outreach Librarian

During February, Tiffany worked with the Women Supporting Women group to set them up in larger meeting space. The WSW Group has been hosting their monthly meeting in the Large Group Study since September and have seen good attendance. As a result, they have outgrown the group study. In order to meet their needs, the library had to shift the date of their meetings to the 3rd Tuesday as to avoid conflict with the Board of Trustees' Meeting. The group will continue to meet once a month in the Dennis Custis Lecture Hall. Additionally, as part of a continuing initiative to support the community and train them on Makerspace equipment, the library hosted a sewing class at noon on 2/20. During this program, Tiffany trained participants on basic sewing machine safety. Through community feedback, Tiffany was able to learn that people are more likely to attend an event during the week if it's held around lunchtime and as seen more success with classes and programs being held at this time. On February 28th, the library will be hosting its 2nd annual Puzzle Competition. At last year's event, the library won! This year teams registered will compete to be the fastest to complete a 750-piece puzzle. Winners will receive puzzle themed prizes.



The library was invited to attend Kegotank Elementary School's reading night on February 4th. About 15 people attended and asked questions about library services. In addition to talking to families, Tiffany was able to connect with local educators about field trips, visiting the schools, and additional outreach endeavors. Additionally, the Regional Library collaborated with Chincoteague Island Library for another telescope night. Once again, the weather did not allow for telescope use but Mr. McGill came prepared with a presentation about the upcoming Artemis mission to the moon and had children participate in astronaut training. 17 people attended and were pleased with the program. Attempts to view the stars will continue to be made.

Mr. Gecko, the creature who has yet to be named, had his 1st vet appointment! He is a healthy little gecko and will have a name soon. The name will be announced on March 14th at the Regional Library's STEM Day. STEM Day (also Pi Day) will celebrate the launch of our circulating STEM kits, present the library pet, and explore local STEM organizations. Treats and prizes will be available. And, finally, Summer Reading is in the works! This year's theme is Unearth a Story which features dinosaurs and many fun themed activities. Tiffany is busy scheduling events and planning SummerFest which will be held at the Regional Library in Parksley.





Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



February was a busy month of public programming at Northampton Free Library, with two craft activities for kids on the 5th and 19th and an adult craft night on the 12th. All of the library's public programs were themed around Valentine's Day this month, with the kids making cards and paper plate love bugs and the grown-ups making handmade cards and envelopes from recycled paper. All three of February's public program nights were well attended.

In other news, three trees were removed from around the parking lot, as they had started to decline and shed large limbs during recent inclement weather. Safety of our patrons, staff, and property

is paramount, and these trees were no longer safe. Inside the building, our shelves dedicated to children's nonfiction and graphic novels were completely reorganized to improve visibility and to make more space for new additions to the collection.

Northampton Free Library is looking forward to spring with a packed program calendar for March. Our first program for the month will be a kid's craft night on March 5th. Stop by at 4:30 PM to learn how to make your own playdoh, brought to you by Northampton 4-H! This program is free and signup is not required. The following week, Northampton Free Library will host our monthly adult craft activity on March 12th starting at 6:00 PM. This time we'll be making springtime bonnets. This program is free, but signup in advance is required. Keep an eye on the Northampton Free Library Facebook page or ask at the front desk for more information. We'll be starting a special series of programs centered around the library's pollinator garden starting on Saturday, March 21st starting at 10:30 AM. An Eastern Shore Master Gardener will be here to guide you through the library's garden as it changes through the season and offer advice about starting a garden of your own at home. Finally, we will be hosting another kid's craft night on Thursday, March 26th starting at 6:00 PM. Come get into the spring spirit with paper plate butterflies! This program is free and a snack will be provided. Signup is not required.

Kids should keep an eye out this month, because a friendly leprechaun will be hiding a pot of gold somewhere in the children's section every day! Bring it back to the front desk to collect a prize!

Tech Help will continue to be offered on demand on Wednesdays through the month of March.

Northampton Free Library will be closed on Monday, March 23rd for staff training.



Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



In February, the Cape Charles Memorial Library marked Black History Month by showcasing book displays for both youth and adults, emphasizing the history, accomplishments, and experiences of African Americans.

Local historian Bobby Harmon attracted a sizable audience with his presentation, *The Untold Black History of Northampton County*. For those who couldn't make it, Mr. Harmon's talk was recorded and can be accessed at www.facebook.com/CapeCharlesMemorialLibrary/videos/1642261150292891/



CAPE CHARLES MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Invites you to celebrate
NATIONAL PLANT A FLOWER DAY
March 12, 2026 (Thursday)
10:00am to 12:00pm
restocked!
 Visit our ^ Seed Library and check out:

- GMO-Free ES Native Flower seeds
- Non-GMO Vegetables seeds
- Non-GMO Fruit seeds
- Non-GMO Herb seeds

**Limit 4 seed packets per household/month.*

Eastern Shore Virginia Master Gardeners will be on site to answer gardening questions.

**Engage with a Master Gardener and get a chance to win a prize!*





We extend our gratitude to the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners who kindly volunteered their time to help label seed packets and sort bulk seeds into individual packets. Our Seed Cart will be restocked with additional native flower seeds, as well as non-GMO fruit and vegetable seeds, and will be available to the public starting March 12, 2026. Participants in the National Plant a Flower Day program will have the chance to engage with Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and choose up to 4 packets of seeds to plant at home.

at Cape Charles Memorial Library

THINKING MONEY FOR KIDS Launchpad tablets are ready for checkout!



These kid-friendly devices come pre-loaded with great financial education games. No internet connection required! Take one home today.

AVAILABLE FOR CHECKOUT AT CCML—Playaway Launchpad tablets are designed to help children (ages 3–12) learn about financial literacy through interactive digital games. These kid-friendly devices, require no Wi-Fi or downloads. The games focus on topics like earning, saving, spending, and



Chincoteague Island Library

Teresa Wright, Library Manager



The month of February was cold and windy on the outside but the library was warm and cozy on the inside.

Tales 4 Tots: Tales 4 Tots was all about Puppies & Kitties, Valentine's Day, Fantasy Day, and Rock Painting.



Adult Programs: The writers group, book clubs, and stitching groups are all growing every month, with more and more attendance.

Events: Death by Chocolate was a success as always, and kicked off the annual basket raffle fundraiser. A lecture and training was given on Domestic Violence on the 18th, and a star party was held on the 20th to see Jupiter, Saturn, and the Moon.



Upcoming Events:

Search For The Shamrocks March 20-21.

