



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 2026

Director's Update



Christopher Pote,
System Director

This March, we launched two new programs that we are excited to bring to the community: *Healing Reads* provides free resources for those who may be struggling with addiction, domestic abuse, mental health, emotional abuse, and/or PTSD. Please read more about it the Technical Services report on page 3. And as of the 14th, we are now also offering STEM Kits for families to borrow from all four libraries. These kits will allow parents and children to learn and engage with science, technology, engineering, and math topics through creative, interactive, take-home activities for kids of all ages. Come check them out!



Upcoming April Highlights Eastern Shore Public Library System

- **2nd: Adult Craft 6PM - NFL**
- **7th: Makerspace Class 6PM - ESRL**
- **8th: STEM Club 10:30AM - CCML**
- **8th: Lunch & Learn; Cybersecurity 12PM - ESRL**
- **9th: Romance Book Club 5:30PM - ESRL**
- **10th: Adult Crafternoon 12PM - ESRL**
- **14th: Teen Gaming and Craft Night 5PM - ESRL**
- **16th: Teen Creative Writing 5:30PM - ESRL**
- **18th: Spring 2026 Garden Introduction 10:30AM - NFL**
- **23rd: Spring Kids' Craft Party 5:30PM - ESRL**
- **29th: Poetry Night 6:30PM - CCML**
- **30th: Cybersecurity Lecture 6PM - NFL**
- **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

A little bit of spring cleaning took place this month in the Heritage Center. First, some shelving was rearranged in the Eastern Shore Room. The result is more shelving space dedicated to book displays and small temporary exhibits. The resource guides to material in the Heritage Center and the Library of Virginia, ESVA walking trails, and the other local history organizations' rack cards and local periodicals are now displayed on a spinning slatwall rack for easier access. The cataloging project for the Kirk Mariner Collection has moved on to his collection of magazines and periodicals. Forty banker's boxes were used to store the collection initially, but are starting to show signs of wear. As Luke catalogs, he also processes magazines by placing them in folders and fresh, smaller archival boxes or archival magazine stands. Afterwards they are organized alphabetically by title, or in some cases publisher. Of the roughly 2,700 magazines in Mariner's collection, 1,300 have been processed and cataloged.

The Heritage Center received an exciting donation of scrapbooks made by Hospice of the Eastern Shore, the first group to provide hospice care on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Dedicated volunteers provided this important but difficult task to the area's terminally ill from 1980 to the 2010s. The two scrapbooks cover the group's formation in 1980 to their efforts through 1995. Additional scrapbooks will be donated in the future.

The Heritage Center has 15 yearbooks, either loaned or donated, to send off to the Library of Virginia's Yearbook scanning project. Institutions that participate in this project are added to the queue until asked to send the items to LVA to be added to the Internet Archive site. The Eastern Shore News, for the years 1926-1963 as well as the Northampton Times, 1930-1964 have been added to the Library of Virginia's Virginia Chronicle newspaper database. Links are available on the Newspapers webpage at espl.org.

Heritage Center staff, with M.K. Miles and two other volunteers will be working on a project to highlight the service of Revolutionary War Patriots in the MilesFiles. The Heritage Center will create a webpage that will feature a list of more than 900 Eastern Shore of Virginia Revolutionaries, with icons indicating specific types of service, and each individual will link directly to the individual in MilesFiles.

Heritage Center staff also held an "Intro to AncestryLibrary.com" on March 17th that demonstrated the uses of the free library service version of the database here at the library, explain how to navigate the site, and discussed how it connects to and differs from the Ancestry.com paid subscription. Jazmine briefly discussed FamilySearch in comparison to AncestryLibrary as well as introduced attendees to the MilesFiles. We plan to hold these introductory workshops quarterly to address some of the most common reference questions, and often navigation questions, that arise from the patrons who use the service here at the library and others who have expressed interest in the past.

Heritage Center staff attended Roots Tech 2026, online from March 5-7th, the annual conference held by FamilySearch. The theme "Together," emphasized cross generational and cultural connections. The conference featured sessions discussing genealogical research practices, exploring specific collections, and case studies as well as the virtual expo on new technology and resources relating to this research. Many sessions centered around new AI tools and their uses in popular databases as well as apps that may be helpful for institutions. Heritage Center staff attended sessions focused on researching connections in the Caribbean, ethical practices in the use of AI, ethical practices for genealogists, Freedman's Bank records, DNA analysis methodology, insights into Victorian era burial practices and death documentation, insights into researching bachelors, maidens, childless couples, and lost children, and specific case studies in labor industry sources as well as religious newspaper sources.



Helping the Community through Healing Reads

The library has recently launched a new initiative to help those in our community who may be struggling with addiction, domestic abuse, mental health, or PTSD. Though much progress has been made to remove the societal stigma that has long been associated with these difficulties, ESPL Director, Christopher Pote, recognized that people may still be reluctant to ask for help finding materials on these subjects.

With the generous support of the Friends of the ESPL, a starter collection of 62 books was purchased and placed on a rotating bookshelf in the vestibule of the front entrance of the library in Parksley.

These titles include books for those who may be struggling, as well as for their friends and families. The books are free to take with no questions asked, can be kept as long as needed, and can be returned to the bookshelf to help someone else.



Within the first two weeks, over 30 of the books in this collection were borrowed by members of our community. This level of interest and usage clearly demonstrates a need for these resources. With the remaining funds from the original Friends donation, more titles on addiction and mental health have been ordered to help refill the bookshelf.

In February, the Friends of the ESPL also made a donation in memory of Ann Scott, a long time Friends member and ardent supporter of the work done locally to combat domestic violence. Twenty books focusing on emotional and domestic abuse were purchased and added to the Healing Reads bookshelf in late March.

Additionally, Director Pote allocated funding to purchase a collection of Healing Reads eBooks and eAudio that can now be found on the library's Libby app. For individuals who may find themselves in situations where they are unable to take printed materials home, help is now available digitally. The Healing Reads eBooks can be read or listened to discretely and conveniently on a mobile phone or tablet.

It is ESPL's hope that the books in the Healing Reads collection will find their way into the hands of anyone who needs them, and that the information contained within each title will provide valuable support for the challenges they are facing.



Programs & Outreach Report

Tiffany Flores, Programs and Outreach Librarian



The Eastern Shore Regional celebrated Pi Day by hosting a STEM Day in collaboration with the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, Chincoteague Bay Field Station, And Virginia Spaceport Authority. During this event, families were able to explore the library's NEW STEM Kits, visit and interact with vendor tables, meet Waldo the gecko, and enjoy STEM themed snacks. This was a wonderful success with about thirty attendees. Many of the kids were curious and full of questions as they played with the new kits. In fact, one kid even video called his dad solely so he could show him all the cool things that were at the library! Vendors were also able to connect, share information, and talk about their fields of study. Additionally, the library strives to offer community support during times of need. A great example of this is the

support the library has offered the Artist Guild. Due to the fire at the Historic Onancock School, the Artist Guild has asked the library for space to host their programs. This has led to the library offering their room space but, more importantly, collaborating on programming. On March 21st the Artist Guild led a kid's craft directly after Saturday Story Time. This event had 12 attendees and the host were happy to see that the library came supplied with additional materials to support the kid's creativity. As of now, in both April and May there will be an event that will follow the same format. Tiffany hopes this collaboration has continuous success in the coming months. And, finally, Adult Crafternoons are picking up traction slowly but surely as evidenced by this month's journal making program.



Outreach season is here! And, with it, comes an increased number of schools reaching out to collaborate. Tiffany has had at least three schools reach out for field trips to the library. One school has expressed interest in a tour of the Makerspace and its equipment! She has also been invited out to do Story Time at a local elementary school. With the school year fast approaching it's end, schools seem to be searching for activities to do with their students. Tiffany is always happy to schedule a tour, plan an activity, or visit the schools to meet students and talk about the library. The next couple months will serve as a great opportunity to do just that.

During the March 23rd In-service, Tiffany and Alex Flores opened the MakerSpace so staff could explore and learn about the Bambu Labs 3D Printer and the Huion Art Tablet. Staff members were engaged in learning about both, especially the 3D Printer. It was also good to see staff thinking creatively about what both pieces of equipment can be used to make, practical uses, and more.



Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



Northampton Free Library welcomed Spring with a full calendar of themed public programs. All month long, a friendly leprechaun hid pots of gold around the children's section for kids to find. Any one who found the pot of gold was able to bring it back to the front desk for a prize. The library hosted children's craft nights on March 5th and 26th – for the earlier program, Northampton County 4H came out to teach kids how to make their own playdoh. For the latter, kids were invited back to celebrate springtime by making paper plate butterflies. March's adult craft unfortunately

had to be postponed to April because of inclement weather—more information about that to come. On Saturday, March 21st, the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners stopped by to offer a tour, answer questions, and distribute flower seedlings in our pollinator garden. This is the first of three programs that will be offered by the Master Gardeners at Northampton Free Library over the next few months. Tech Help continued to be offered on every Wednesday through March and was heavily utilized by our patrons this month.

April will be Northampton Free Library's busiest month of public programming yet, starting off with our postponed adult craft on April 2nd at 6:00 PM. We'll be making floral springtime bonnets to celebrate the season. We will also host a second adult craft night at 6:00 PM on April 16th. Attendees to this program will learn how to make claw clips with charms. Both programs are free, but signup in advance is required. Ask at the front desk or keep an eye on our Facebook page for more information. Our first kids craft for the month will be held starting at 4:30 PM on April 9th—this time we'll be making and painting paper plate Easter bunnies! Northampton Free Library will host a second kids craft night on April 23rd starting at 6:00 PM. For this one, kids will be able to color and take home springtime bouquets. Both kids craft programs are free and signup is not required. Snacks will be provided at both programs. On Saturday, April 18th, the Master Gardeners will be back for more questions and answers in our pollinator garden starting at 10:30 AM. Signup is not required, just stop on by! We will close out the month with a special lecture on personal cybersecurity presented by Catie Wilkinson on Thursday, April 30th starting at 6:00 PM. Tech Help will also continue to be offered on demand on every Wednesday during this month of April.



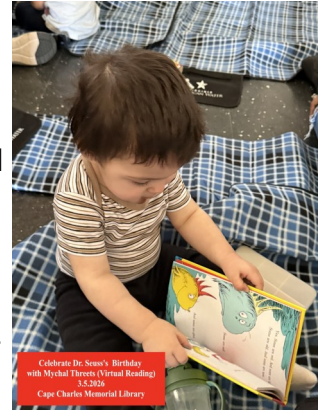
Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



Celebrate Dr. Seuss's Birthday with Mychal Threets (Virtual Reading) 3.5.2026 Cape Charles Memorial Library

March is National Reading Month, a time to celebrate the joy of reading! This special month encourages children, families, and communities to embrace reading, all while we honor Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2. This year, Cape Charles Memorial Library threw a Dr. Seuss Birthday party! With the fantastic Mychal Threets joining us for a virtual story time, attendees were treated to readings of the Seuss classic, *Hop on Pop*, along with Mychal's own lovely new book, *I'm So Happy You're Here: A Celebration of Library Joy*.



Celebrate Dr. Seuss's Birthday with Mychal Threets (Virtual Reading) 3.5.2026 Cape Charles Memorial Library

Families gathered in the library to enjoy the story time on the big screen, and the fun didn't stop there! We had fun activities like making colorful Truffula trees with yarn, as well as a raffle for great prizes including Seuss tote bags and a copy of Mychal Threets's new release. As the festivities wrapped up, each child left with a good bag full of Seussical surprises, including a brand new copy of *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*.



CAPE CHARLES MEMORIAL LIBRARY
NATIONAL PLANT A FLOWER DAY
March 12, 2026 (Virtual)
10:00am to 12:00pm

In celebration of National Plant a Flower Day, CCML hosted the seasonal launch of our seed cart. Visitors had a chance to explore and pick up four free packets of seeds to take home—perfect for planting their own gardens. All our vegetable and fruit seeds are non-GMO, and our flower seeds are GMO-free and native to Virginia. Plus, our knowledgeable friends with Eastern Shore Master Gardeners were on hand to answer any questions and help guests choose the perfect seeds for their gardens. A big thank you to Onancock Building Supply and Onancock

Building Supply—Eastville for donating fabulous door prizes.

We also had a wonderful time at Cape Charles Day, our annual community cleanup and picnic, where CCML set up a table to share information about our services and upcoming spring and summer programs. We promoted litter prevention and recycling through our Department of Environment Quality grant, giving away eco-friendly items such as reusable cotton grocery bags, dryer balls, bamboo toothbrushes and non-plastic pens. Stay tuned for more giveaways in April for Earth Day!



Town of Cape Charles
1886



Chincoteague Island Library

Teresa Wright, Library Manager



The month of March was jam-packed with a STEM event, a celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday, a Bridgerton Tea Party, a trip to the Island Creamery, Search for the Shamrock and more!

Programs:

Tales 4 Tots: Dr. Seuss Day, Island Creamery Day, Spring, and Easter were the themes this month. A total of eighty-one children and seventy-four adults attended for the month.

Writer's Group: The writers group had twenty-one people attend.

Book Club: The book clubs had nine people attend.

Coastal Crocheters: The crochet group had five people attend.

Saltwater Stitches: The saltwater Stitches had thirty-four people attend.

Events:

Astronomy Night: Forty-five people attended.

Bridgerton Tea Party: Twelve people attended

Search for the Shamrock: Approximately three hundred people attended

Stem Craft: Fourteen people attended a stem class on making homemade OOBLECK to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday.

Library Report:

1. We are currently weeding out old and outdated books and replacing them with newer releases specifically the Young Adult and Audio Book sections.