



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

August 2026

Director's Update



Christopher Pote,
System Director

As we round the corner towards Fall, I look back proudly on a very successful summer. All four libraries saw increased participation in their Summer Reading Programs, increased attendance in regular summer programming, and overall increased visitation. This is consistent with what we have seen system-wide over the past year. For fiscal year 2026, ESPL saw a total visitation increase of 9%, circulation was up 5%, computer usage up 22%, and usage of system wifi also up 5%. Library staff strive to serve our communities as best as possible, and I hope these numbers are reflective of their hard work and dedication.



Upcoming September Highlights Eastern Shore Public Library System

- **7th: LIBRARIES CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY**
- **8th: Teen Craft Night (5pm) - ESRL**
- **10th: Adult Craft (6pm) - NFL**
- **10th: Young Adult Social Group 20+ (6pm) - ESRL**
- **11th: Makerspace Class, Button Press (12pm) - ESRL**
- **14th: A Free Afternoon of Music with Sarah McQuaid (3pm) - ESRL**
- **17th: Teen Creative Writing (5:30pm) - ESRL**
- **17th: Kids' Art (4:30pm) - NFL**
- **25th: Adult Crafternoon (12pm) - ESRL**
- **29th: Makerspace Class, Sewing Machine (6pm) - 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

In the archives side of the Heritage Center, processing and cataloging is ongoing for the Kirk Mariner Collection. The binders of "The Shoreline" articles mentioned in last month's report are part of a series from Mariner's collection titled "Non-Book." This series includes articles by other historians collected by Mariner, such as "The Shoreline," but also original research that Mariner compiled. His notes and workbooks for "Revival's Children" and "Slave and Free on Virginia's Eastern Shore" fall under this series, as does his own local history newspaper column, "Chronicles." Other highlights include compilations of newspaper articles that mention specific towns like Chincoteague and Onancock; Eastern Shore business cards and ephemera; chronological histories of schools, movie theaters, mills, and hotels; and research on the Civil War and the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Non-Book is over two dozen boxes in total that are now processed and cataloged.

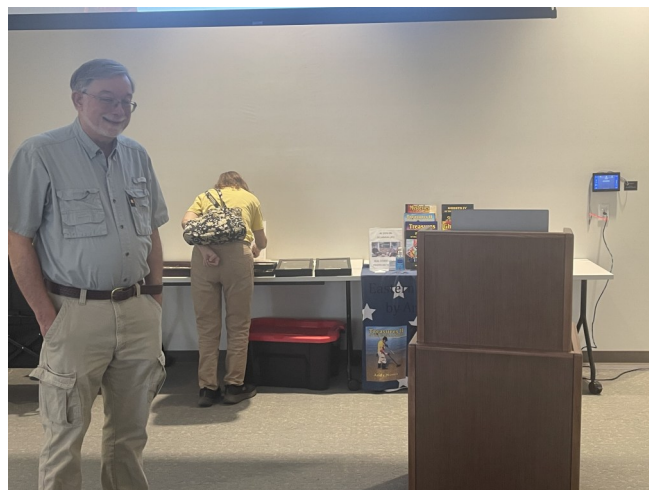
The next series of Mariner's collection that will be cataloged are photographs and his Card Catalog. Both will be digitized. The card catalog is an important component of the collection as it was how Mariner kept track of his collection without collections management software. Many of the cards are citations for works of Eastern Shore history and Mariner noted on each card if there was a copy in his collection. Having the cards uploaded to our catalog will make browsing the collection even easier. Speaking of browsing the collection, the public access catalog has its final edits and will be live on the Heritage Center's website very soon. The upcoming month will focus on website edits and changes as we prepare to integrate the public access catalog and update other search features.



On August 11th, The Heritage Center hosted a presentation, Lost Treasures of the Eastern Shore by Delmarva author Andy Nunez. Nunez shared details and finds that he has written and brought some of the artifacts that he has discovered with his metal detecting.

Heritage Center staff attended the Outlaw Blacksmith Shop Shoe Box Lunch fundraising event. The event was scaled down from the previous two years, possibly due to impending inclement weather, but was still well attended.

Several new titles have been added to the Eastern Shore Room's monograph collection and the collection continues to grow with the addition of titles from the Mariner collection. A list of new additions will be available on the Heritage Center's website this month.





A Library of Things—supporting sustainability, affordability and creativity

The staff of the Eastern Shore Public Library has begun working in earnest on an exciting new collection, the Library of Things. A Library of Things contains non-traditional library items such as tools, kitchen equipment, outdoor gear, and musical instruments. It promotes sustainability through the sharing of items between community members, reduces waste, and provides access to items that might otherwise be unaffordable.

Each item in our Library of Things will be available for library patrons to borrow for two weeks. Patrons can check out a piece of equipment or a tool that they might need only occasionally, without needing to make a purchase. This collection will allow people to “try before you buy” to make sure that the item is best suited for their particular situation. The Library of Things also makes it possible to explore a new hobby or skill before making an investment in the items needed to get started.

In preparation for this new project, members of the library’s cataloging team have been expanding their knowledge about object cataloging, which differs significantly from the way that print books and audiovisual items are cataloged.

Using authoritative references from the Library of Congress and other respected cataloging organizations, ESPL catalogers are creating records that accurately represent the wide variety of physical items found in the Library of Things. Our goal is for each item to be clearly described in our catalog, and also findable through basic keyword searches by library patrons.

Once the items have been cataloged, they will be labeled and tagged to support the organized storage and circulation activities associated with this new collection. At the administrative level, discussions are ongoing about library procedures such as borrowing guidelines, patron agreements, and circulation rules, as well as practical considerations such as storage space and staff training.

An important final piece of our preparations will be the creation of a binder, one for each ESPL branch and affiliate library, that includes a listing and photo of every item in the Library of Things. The binder will allow library patrons across the Eastern Shore to request and borrow items from this collection, even if they live far from the library’s Main branch in Parksley, as the library courier can pick up and deliver “things” to all four ESPL locations.

Be sure to stay tuned for an announcement of the launch of this wonderful new collection! Whether you’d like to try a keyboard piano, use a drill driver, or play bocce, the Library of Things will have you covered.





Programs & Outreach Report

Tiffany Flores, Programs and Outreach Librarian



Summer Reading is over! Eight weeks of a flurry of programs with incredible participation! For this year's challenge, we had 113 children participate. Many of them were pleased with all of the exciting dinosaur prizes. This year's collaboration with the Community Service Board had an average of 13 participants per week which is remarkably better attended than years prior. Teen programming boomed with about 20 participants a night for each event. Even daytime crafts performed well, with good average monthly participation.

For the final event, the Regional Library hosted their first Mystery Party Scavenger Hunt, *The Search for the Missing Jewel* written by ESPL staff member Maria Burns. Staff and volunteers donned their best dino onesies and performed an scripted interactive mystery activity with a slew of children following. Over 40 people attended and participated to discover who stole the magic egg that would save dinosaur-kind. Near the end of the performance, the "meteor" was destroyed and a balloon explosion erupted in the Dennis Custis Lecture Hall which delighted the children. This was a huge success that many of the patrons are not likely to forget any time soon. Overall, this summer has been extremely successful with a lot of engagement from the public. Many were happy with this year's programming and super excited about the dinosaur theme.

The Regional Library had multiple outreach events throughout August. The Be Well Block Party in Parksley on August 1st was attended by 200 individuals who were well informed about library services and encouraged to visit the library in town. In addition to encouraging participants to visit the library, they were also able to see the new van at its very first outreach event! Attendees loved the design, and commented on how it was a good reflection of the Eastern Shore.



In addition, the library has attended a back to school event in Exmore with about 150 attendees and a family day in Parksley with similar attendance. Each event was crucial to reaching different community members and marketing our services. On August 18th, the library also attended another Back to School event at ESCC hosted by Telemon. This one focused on volunteering opportunities and served as a way to remind the community that the library is an option.

Thanks to the wonderful help of our interns, Take and Makes for next year are in the process of being packed. This is a wonderful help to the programming workload as it takes the burden off staff preparing the kits on a monthly basis. So far all of Autumn kits are prepared and Spring are ready to be packed. Winter and Summer supplies have been planned and ordered (shipping issues caused winter to be delayed). Tiff hopes that by the end of October all kits will be packed and stored away for the year!



Northampton Free Library

Connor Buyn, Branch Manager



Northampton Free Library closed out the summer season with our end of summer reading pizza party and prize drawing on August 6th. The following week, we hosted a nautical themed yarn-painting art activity for our adult patrons. Finally, our kids' art night for the month was held on the 20th. Attendees built and decorated their own paper tube dinosaurs to cap off our dinosaur-themed summer reading season. Demand for our on-demand tech help program, offered on every Wednesday, continued to be steady throughout the month of August.

Tech help will continue to be offered on every Wednesday during the month of September. Our first public program of the month will be our adult craft, hosted at 6:00 PM on Thursday, September 10th. Attendees will learn how to make wood slice coasters. The following week at 4:30 PM on Thursday, September 17th, we'll host our first kids' art night of the month. This time we'll be learning how to make paper plate autumn trees to get in the fall spirit. One week later on Thursday the 24th, we'll host another kids' art night starting at 6:00 PM, where we'll make paper plate autumn leaves to keep the theme going.

Northampton Free Library will be closed day on Monday, September 7th in observance of Labor Day. Enjoy the holiday!



all



Cape Charles Memorial Library

Sharon Silvey, Library Manager



This August, we were thrilled to welcome the Eastern Shore Soil & Wildlife Conservation District back to CCML. Education Director Julie Head shared fascinating insights with attendees about the energy involved in producing ice cream—from cow to cone. Over 100 participants had the delightful experience of making their own ice cream, perfect for a hot August day.



We are excited to announce that this marks our fourth summer collaborating with the University of Virginia Coastal Research Center for our beach seining program. A huge thank you to the incredible undergraduate students who helped drag the net, identify the marine creatures, and provided participants with a close encounter with nature.

Our newest weekly program, Wiggle Worms, is receiving fantastic feedback. This storytime initiative, designed for children aged 0 to 2 years, utilizes early concept books to introduce colors, numbers, animals, and more. Each session revolves around a specific theme, featuring plenty of repetition to aid toddlers in strengthening their memory, forming brain connections, and acquiring new skills.



As Summer 2026 draws to a close, the staff at Cape Charles Memorial Library is immensely proud of all our summer reading participants! This summer boasted the highest number of reading registrants and the largest participation across all seven weeks.

CCML will go back to our regularly scheduled monthly programs in September:

- * Wiggle Worms Storytime for ages 0—2, every Tuesday at 10:30am
- * Little Sprouts Storytime for ages 3—5, every Tuesday at 11am
- * Crochet & Knit for ages 16+, first and third Thursday of each month at 11am





Chincoteague Island Library

Jodi Novak, Information Specialist I

Jon Adams, Information Specialist II



We had a LOT going on in the month of August! The last month of summer brought many families in for both our programs and just casual family visits. Here are a few highlights from the month:

Our Summer Reading program tied up with a pizza party and raffle prize drawing event. Our participants received library T-shirts and had a chance to win an Amazon Kindle or one of several other prizes. The kids LOVED the summer reading dinosaur theme! Forty-six kids completed the Summer Reading program. (Our highest number yet!)



Our summer Young Explorers Program (for school-aged kids) ended their summer program with a visit from the Virginia Spaceport Authority. The explorers learned about what the Spaceport Authority does and were led through activities and crafts.



Our best-attended event of the month was a visit from Coastal Wilds of Frankford, Delaware. The Coastal Wilds representatives brought several animal friends to meet our patrons. Over 150 people showed up to experience this program. It was a great event.



Our final event of the month was a "Going-Away" party and reception for Harriet Lonergan, who was instrumental in founding the Chincoteague Island Library, and served here as Librarian and later a Volunteer for over 30 years.

