

ANNUAL REPORT

Washington County Free Library
Washington County, MD

FY
20
23



ANNUAL REPORT

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**WASHINGTON COUNTY
FREE LIBRARY**

Where People & Possibilities Meet

Mission

The Washington County Free Library is committed to building a strong, interconnected, diverse community by bringing people, information and ideas together.

100 South Potomac Street Hagerstown, MD 21740
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A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Patrons, Supporters, and Friends of the Washington County Free Library,

I am pleased to present our 2023 Annual Report, highlighting the significant achievements and milestones we have accomplished together in serving our community.

This past year has marked exceptional progress for the Washington County Free Library. I'm excited to announce an increase in our circulation, marking a 26% rise from the previous year. Additionally, our commitment to innovation and accessibility was evident through the North Pointe smart locker system, which experienced an impressive 49% surge in usage. This growth underscores the dedication of our patrons and the tireless efforts of our library staff in offering diverse and engaging collections and services.

In addition to our traditional offerings, this year saw the integration of multiple community health programs. We addressed critical issues like period poverty by providing free menstrual products in all our restrooms, ensuring essential health resources are readily available. Furthermore, our collaboration with the Washington County Health Department played a pivotal role in the ongoing distribution of Covid-19 tests and in addressing mental health concerns within our community. These initiatives mirror our commitment to the overall well-being of our patrons and neighbors.

In recognition of the Library's hard work, we were honored with the prestigious "At Your Service" Award at the Washington County Chamber of Commerce's 2023 Business Awards. This achievement validates our unwavering dedication to excellence in service and innovation. My heartfelt thanks extends to our staff and supporters whose dedication made this accolade possible.

As we celebrate these achievements, I extend my deepest gratitude to our patrons, staff, volunteers, and community members whose steadfast support propels our mission forward. Together, we continue to forge a more vibrant and resilient community.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership in our endeavors. We eagerly anticipate another year of growth, service, and community engagement.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Z. Bakos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J".

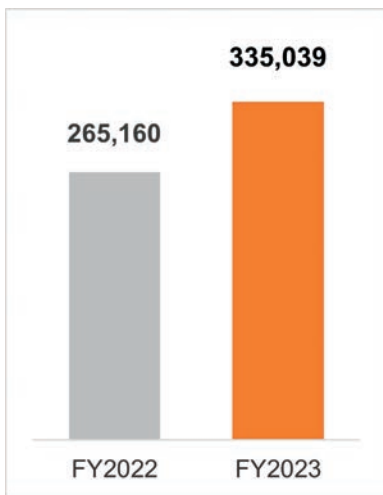
Jenny Bakos, Executive Director



LIBRARY USE

Washington County Free Library was bustling with increased usage in the 2023 fiscal year! Residents of Washington County visited the system's **eight libraries** and **one bookmobile** over 335,000 times! WCFL's collection of **506,518 physical materials** and **quality digital library offerings** ensures there is something for everyone to enjoy.

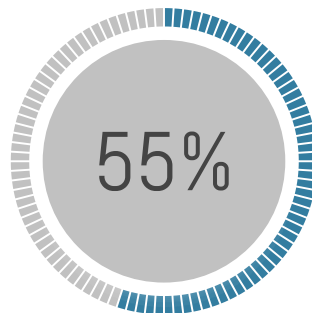
LIBRARY VISITS



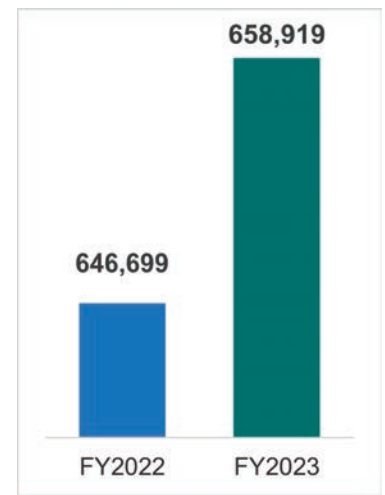
Visits increased by **26%** between FY2022 and FY2023.

TOTAL CARDHOLDERS

86,135 of 156,889 county residents are library cardholders.

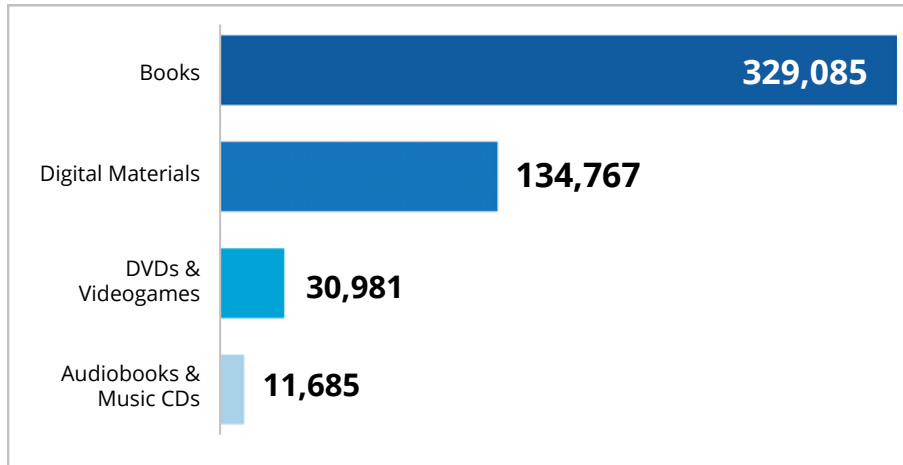


TOTAL CIRCULATION



Circulation continues to see a consistent increase.

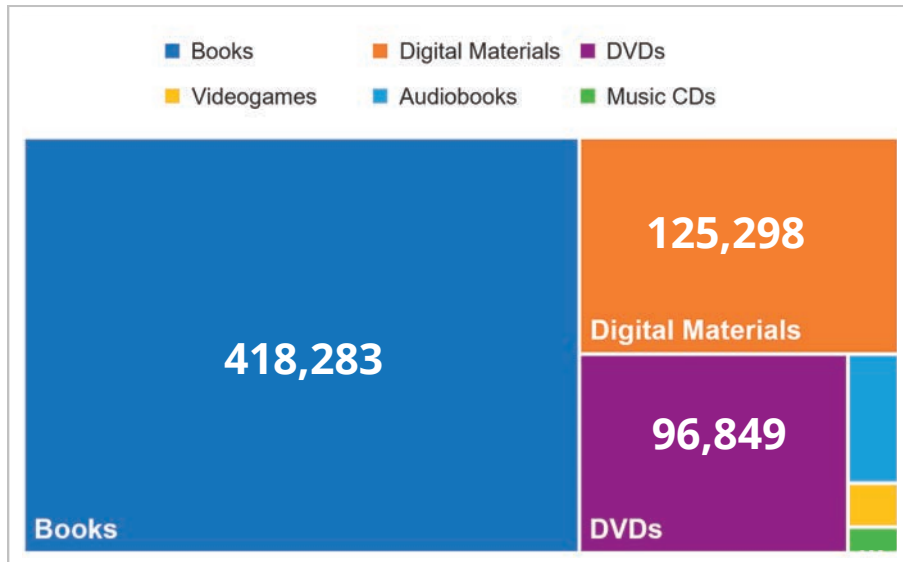
LIBRARY COLLECTIONS



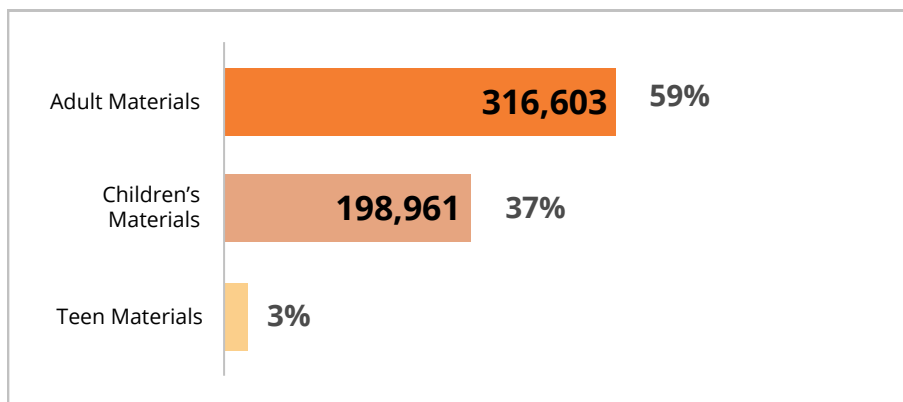
786 other materials are not represented in this graphic.

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CIRCULATION BY FORMAT



PHYSICAL MATERIALS CIRCULATED BY TYPE



At Your Service Award



This year, library staff throughout the county were honored for their commitment to incredible customer service with the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Business Award's *At Your Service Award*. Library staff at all locations and levels are dedicated to making libraries in Washington County welcoming, safe places to learn and connect.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

Total Materials:
20,411

10,499 Materials Borrowed
9,912 Materials Lent

Interlibrary Loan allows Washington County community members to access materials available in libraries throughout Maryland and beyond.



ACCESS & ACCESSIBILITY

Washington County Free Library is dedicated to making life-changing services and resources available to all community members. Last year, access to pick up library holds was expanded with the North Pointe smart locker system and, this year the locker system continues to see **49% increased usage** over the course of FY23.

In FY23, a focus on community health brought increase access to menstrual products in libraries throughout the county. With support from Meritus Health and the Washington County Health Department, WCFL is now a recipient of free 100% cotton menstrual products through the Aunt Flow program. Community members have expressed appreciation for this kind of expansion of services to meet ongoing needs like period poverty.



Library Stories

A staff member was approached by a young customer asking to learn more about the library. She shared that she didn't want to get a library card because she cannot read well— she has dyslexia.

The staff member showed this patron a section of books in the Children's Department with dyslexia-friendly font. She thumbed through a book, smiling the whole time. When asked if she could make out any of the words, she said, "Yes!"

She was excited to ask staff about finding more dyslexia-friendly books for all ages. Accessibility changes lives.

Access to Internet Connectivity

According to the 2020 Census, approximately 18% of households in Washington County do not have a home internet connection. WCFL branches have **104 public computers**, in addition to printers, scanners, and more to help lessen the digital divide in Washington County.

10,276	Wi-Fi Sessions
44,815	Computer Sessions
55,091	Computer + Wi-Fi Hours

MEETING ROOMS & STUDY SPACES

433	Meetings Hosted
2,479	Study Rooms Booked

Meeting rooms offer space for community organizations, businesses, and more, and study spaces offer students, small business owners, and others a quiet, private space to study or meet.

This year, hosted events in library spaces included test proctoring, strategic planning sessions, apartment tenant meetings, public information sessions, team building workshops, homeschool co-ops, interviews, and more!



Access to Information

Library staff work hard to meet a wide range of information needs for all community members quickly, efficiently, and compassionately. This year, staff answered **41,857 questions**. That's 115 questions per day!

Community members visited WCFL's **70 premium digital services** for accurate, trusted database results a total of **154,470 times**.

Library Stories

Staff shared that an older couple visited the library looking for a recipe from a local restaurant that is no longer in business. They knew the recipe had been in the Herald Mail sometime in the last 10-15 years. Other than that, they didn't know anything else about the recipe.

Library staff were able to locate the article and recipe for them! They were so happy to have this recipe again that they invited staff for dinner when they eventually make the recipe.

Library Stories

A gentleman came in with his newly purchased chainsaw to show it to the librarians! He spent a very long time researching the best value chainsaws to find one that wasn't too heavy for his shoulder. He wanted to thank staff for the use of the library's computers to do this research and show them the result of his efforts.

PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES

The Washington County Free Library offers programming for all ages groups. In fiscal year 2023, WCFL saw an **12% increase** in overall program attendance from FY22. More children attended programs this year with an increase from 67% to 77% of overall attendance, and more teens attended programs rising from 6% to 11%!

**37,276 PEOPLE ATTENDED
2,303 PROGRAMS**

**18 ATTENDEES PER
PROGRAM ON AVERAGE**



CHILDREN (77%)

TEENS (11%)

ADULTS (12%)



EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

WCFL has focused resources to help foster caregiver engagement and support childcare providers in early childhood learning.

Storytimes with crafts, songs, and activities offer children and caregivers opportunities to engage with one another, learn, and grow. Children and young adults explored their interest in literature with book clubs and writing contents, as well as STEM with experiments and building challenges.

ENHANCING EDUCATION

Book giveaways, author visits, creative maker experiences, and more offer students of all ages opportunities to learn and grow. Library staff are available to offer homework help and research assistance to K-12 students and beyond.

Many WCPS middle and high school classes visited their local libraries for tours and to learn about resources accessible with their RAIL (Raising Access to Improve Literacy) student library cards.

Homeschool Enrichment Classes gained popularity this year with educational and social opportunities for students during programs like Junk Drawer Robotics, presented by the 4-H Extension Office, and karate class, presented by Sensei Pat of Smith's Karate.

Library Stories

A gentleman came to the front desk and shared his regard for the library. He told the staff that, as a little boy, he was the youngest of five and was always competing with his siblings for everything, especially for his mom's attention. She frequently visited the library and he quickly learned that if he came along with her, he could have her all to himself.

These visits with his mom led him one day to pick up the book entitled, *So, You Want to be a Lawyer?* He asked his mom if she would check it out for him, she said, "Yes, absolutely." Everyone else made fun of him for reading this book telling him he would never be a lawyer, but he kept coming to the library with his mom and reading more books with her encouragement. He grew up, attended HCC, then UMBC, then the University of Maryland School of Law before passing his bar exam.

He became that lawyer. Then, he became a judge. All this happened because he picked up a book with his mom at the library. Judge David W. Young shared, "This place can change the trajectory of people's lives."



WCFL Program Highlights

Hidden Treasures

Sharpsburg Library presented a short program, Hidden Treasures in the Sharpsburg Library, about the three books the branch manager found that were signed by a Civil War soldier in the NY militia and one signed by a local Sharpsburg Union soldier. The program explored the soldiers' connections to each other and in Sharpsburg.

Summer Reading Club

Summer Reading Club helps prevent "summer slide" for students with a balance of self-paced reading goals and fun programs. This summer the Bookmobile crew brought the Summer Reading Club to 943 people in different locations throughout the summer. Out of the 943, there were 928 program finishers from the bookmobile stops!

Makerspace

As part of its newly opened Makerspace, Williamsport Memorial Library purchased four child-sized sewing machines and held a series of programs to make simple sewing projects. Attendees enjoyed learning and the products of their new skill!

Homeschool Book Club

The Sharpsburg Library's Homeschool Book Club made knotted blankets as a part of a kindness project. Nine fleece blankets were given to San Mar Treatment Foster Care for kids in their program. Students were excited about this project and talked about future opportunities to give back to the community!

WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Life skills workshops, financial and digital literacy classes, one-on-one job search support, and community partnerships help WCFL provide ample opportunities for job seekers, entrepreneurs, and business owners to learn and connect.



Library Stories

A gentleman came in to use public access computers, and he was attempting to sign into his unemployment account to ensure he could file appropriate paperwork to receive his checks. He was struggling to log in despite being on the phone with a representative. He explained to library staff that he'd been trying to get logged in for weeks and was clearly frustrated. After about a half an hour of investigation, searching email, and retrieving passwords, staff were finally able to get him logged in on the last possible attempt. He was so grateful, he hugged staff and said, "Thank you so much! Today was my deadline and I thought I'd never make it!"

To foster an interconnected community, the library incorporates multicultural and diverse thinking into our programming, reaches out to historically underserved communities, and collaborates with other organizations to strengthen bonds.





RESPONDING TO THE COMMUNITY

Washington County Free Library strives to anticipate and be responsive to community aspirations and needs, both current and future.

With a focus on health and financial wellness, staff created a Seed Library for the Williamsport Memorial Library in spring. More than 33 patrons participated and took home over 200 seed packets to plant. In June, more seeds were added and over 46 patrons participated. Many stopped back to let staff know about the progress of their gardens! Some community members began dropping off seeds for the seed collection to help build the program for other gardeners.

Library Stories

The voting display a library staff member created prior to Election Day worked! The staff member was working as an election judge when a young woman came into the polling place carrying the LWV Voter's Guide and Vote411 card, and she said she got them at the library. She spent some time looking at the resources before she voted.

Social bonds formed during library programs are important to highlight. Teens were very engaged working through puzzles together during popular Escape Room programs in Smithsburg and Williamsport. Attendees even requested specific themes based on their shared interests for subsequent Escape Room programs.

Library programs offer connection for residents of all ages. In Hancock, library staff offer a craft day each month at the Hancock Senior Center. Participants look forward to working on new creative activities together!



WCFL Program Highlights

Spotting the Lanternfly

In September, the Department of Agriculture to give an educational lecture about the invasive Spotted Lanternfly, Spotting the Spotted Lanternfly. The presenter discussed identification, sexual dimorphism, and commercial vs. residential removal.

Flashback Storytime

To celebrate 101 years of the Smithsburg Library, staff designed a "Flashback Storytime" reflecting storytime in the 1920s with inventions and activities from that time period. Children used washboards and a clothesline to clean clothes for an interactive experience.

Lawyer in the Library

In early 2023, Maryland Legal Aid offered community members the opportunity drop in and get advice from lawyers on any civil matters about which they had questions. Free service at the Lawyer in the Library program is extremely popular.

Writing & Design Contests

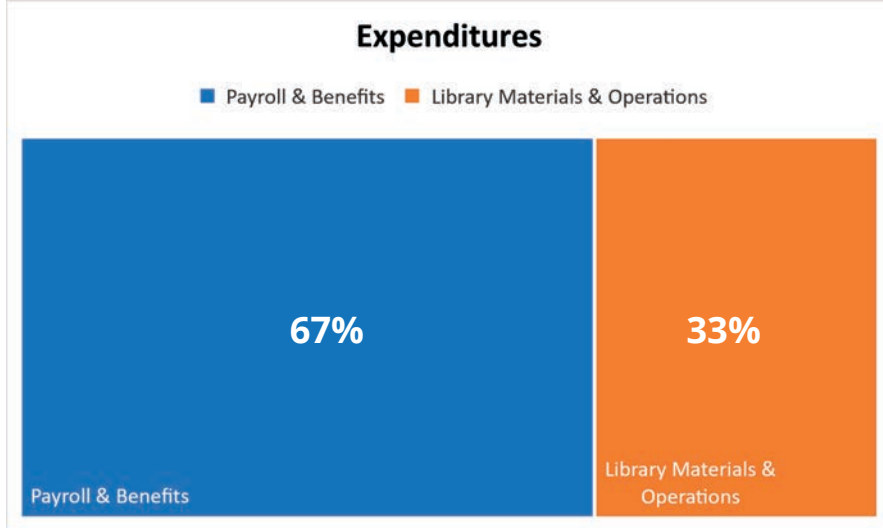
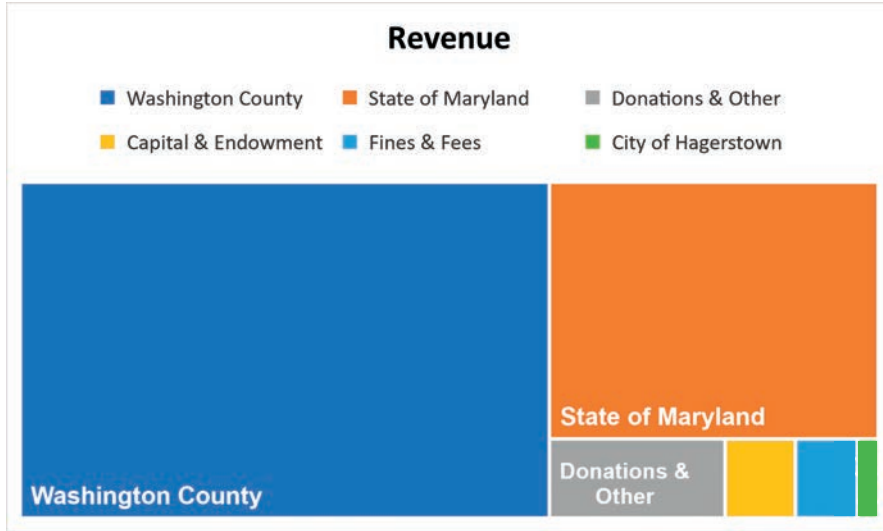
The library received 161 entries into the annual Writers and Poets Contest and a record 222 entries for the annual Design a Bookmark Contest! These contests showcased the talent and creativity of young county residents!

History in Smithsburg

The Historical Society President gave an engaging talks on the Woman of Smithsburg during the Civil War and on Cavetown during the Civil War. The latter program had 65 adults and 4 teens in attendance!

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Total Budget: \$5,475,373.00



The staff listed here work hard every day to provide free materials, programs, and other services to the Washington County community across eight libraries and a bookmobile.

Staff Breakdown by Position FY23

WCFL Personnel (Total FTE): 72

14 Professional Librarians

These positions require a **Master's Degree** from an American Library Association accredited college or university and a **Professional Librarian Certificate** from the State of Maryland, along with the completion of continuing education credits on an annual basis.

3 Professional Support Staff

These positions require either a **Bachelor's Degree or a Master's Degree** in a specialized field relating to either Information Technology or Finance.

10 FT | 17 PT

Library Associates

These positions require a **Bachelor's Degree** and the completion of a **LATI** (Library Associates Training Institute) certification, along with the completion of continuing education credits on an annual basis.

21 FT | 27 PT

Library Assistants

1 FT | 3 PT

Security Officers

2 FT Maintenance Workers

2 PT Custodians

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Investing in the well-being of your community pays dividends. When you invest in your public library system, those dollars are put toward educational infrastructure, economic development, cultivating connections, and beyond.

The personal stories shared by Washington County residents who use the library, the quantitative data gathered throughout FY23, and the below Estimated Value of Library Services chart offer a snapshot of Washington County Free Library's impact.

Estimated Value of Library Services

Quantity	Service	Retail Value*	Value
20,411	Materials Borrowed via Interlibrary Loan	\$25.00	\$510,275.00
405,946	Books and Print Materials Borrowed	\$22.00	\$8,930,812.00
101,381	DVDs and Other Media Borrowed	\$20.00	\$2,027,620.00
138,847	eBook & Audiobooks Downloaded	\$27.00	\$3,748,869.00
41,857	One-on-One Research and Tech Assistance	\$20.00	\$837,140.00
32,802	Children and Teens Programs Attendees	\$16.00	\$524,832.00
4,474	Adult Programs Attendees	\$18.00	\$80,532.00
154,470	Premium Digital Resource Searches	\$15.00	\$2,317,050.00
55,091	Computer and Wi-Fi Hours	\$18.00	\$991,638.00
2,479	Study Room Use	\$50.00	\$123,950.00
443	Community Meeting Room Use	\$250.00	\$110,750.00

Total: \$20,203,468.00

*Retail Value based on estimates.

For every \$1 Washington County spent on library services, the community received approximately \$4.98 worth in services.

PARTNERSHIPS

Washington County Free Library is generously supported by elected officials at the city, county, and state levels.

Notable partnerships this year include:

- WCFL continued to distributed Covid-19 at-home test kits and KN-95 masks provided by the **Washington County Health Department** to county residents.
- 26,498 **WCPS** students have RAIL (Raising Access to Improve Literacy) library accounts they can use to check out materials or use library computers.
- WCFL was honored as an active partner in **Meritus Health's** Go for Bold initiative and offer a wellness series in several library branches with **POWER HOUSE Studios**.
- The **Master Gardeners** dedicated a beautiful Sensory Garden in front of the Boonsboro Library.
- The **Town of Sharpsburg**, with support from the **Nora Roberts Foundation**, opened a new permanent StoryWalk in the Sharpsburg Community Park for families to enjoy different stories together outdoors!
- In January and February, 358 Common Cents Community Building Initiative STEM kits were distributed in Hagerstown, the library branches, and via the bookmobile in partnership with the **Discovery Station**.
- Boonsboro Library staff collaborated with the **Boonesborough Historical Society** to hold their monthly meetings at the library and bring in lively speakers for historical library programs.
- WCFL presented musical storytimes in partnership with musicians from the **Maryland Symphony Orchestra**.
- Sharpsburg Library staff presented a Storytime in Our Community series that included visits to the local **Post Office, Antietam Pumpkins**, and the historic Tolson's Chapel and School for an interactive activity with the **Friends of Tolson's Chapel**.



The library wishes to thank Washington County, the City of Hagerstown, and the many community organizations that provide support for our classes, workshops, special programs, and activities throughout the year.

- Antietam Pumpkins
- Apples for Children
- Authentic Community Theatre
- Baltimore Orioles
- Barbara Ingram School for the Arts
- Bester Community of Hope
- Boys & Girls Club of Washington County
- Chick-Fil-A
- CISCO
- Citizens for Maryland Libraries
- City of Hagerstown
- The Collegium
- Community Action Council
- Community Foundation of Washington County
- Dairy Queen
- Denny's
- Discovery Station
- First United Bank and Trust
- Food Lion
- Frederick Keys
- Fresh Academicz
- Friends of the Library
- Google
- Hadley Farms Bakery
- Hagerstown Community College
- Hancock Senior Center
- Head Start of Washington County
- Herald-Mail Media
- Horizon Goodwill
- Hospice of Washington County
- Hope Through Birth
- Hub@Hagerstown
- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- Judy Center of Washington County
- Kiwanis of Hagerstown
- Krispy Kreme
- Labor of Love
- Law Enforcement/Mental Health Task Force
- Live 96.7
- Martin's Foods
- Maryland Coalition of Families
- Maryland 529
- Maryland Humanities Council
- Maryland Department of Health
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland Division of Library Development and Services
- Maryland Science Center
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Maryland State Library Resource Center
- The Maryland Theatre
- Meritus Health
- Meritus Medical Center
- Middletown Valley Bank
- Misty Meadows Farm Creamery
- Neighborhoods First
- The Nora Roberts Family Foundation
- OnTrack Washington County, Inc.
- Potomac Case Management
- Potomac Valley Audubon Society
- Sharpsburg Historical Society
- Sheetz, Inc.
- Sheehy Hagerstown
- Sila Bartel
- Smith's Karate
- Smithsburg Historical Society
- Star Theatre
- SueChefs.org
- Town of Boonsboro
- Town of Clear Spring
- Town of Hancock
- Town of Keedysville
- Town of Sharpsburg
- Town of Smithsburg
- Town of Williamsport
- Tri-State Astronomers
- United Way of Washington County
- University of Maryland 4-H Extension Office
- University System of Maryland at Hagerstown
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. Postal Service
- Visit Hagerstown - Washington County CVB
- Volvo Group Trucks
- Waffle House
- WashCOLIT
- Washington County Chamber of Commerce
- Washington County Commission on Aging, Inc.
- Washington County Historical Society
- Washington County Homeless Coalition
- Washington County Master Gardeners
- Washington County Museum of Fine Arts
- Washington County Public Schools
- Washington County Reads
- WDVM
- Western Maryland Consortium
- Western Maryland Regional Library
- William Brish Planetarium
- Weis Markets
- WJEJ 1240 AM



WASHINGTON COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

Where People & Possibilities Meet



Boonsboro



Clear Spring



Hancock



Keedysville



Hagerstown



Sharpsburg



Smithsburg



Bookmobile



Williamsport

How can I support my library?

Join the Friends of the Library!

Join a group of library lovers who fundraise, advocate, and volunteer their time to support free library programs! Membership is just \$5 a year.

Speak Up!

Advocate for your library locally, at the state level, and at the federal level. Let your elected officials know why public libraries matter to you.

Donate!

Financially support your library to help further our mission, purchase materials, offer free educational and cultural programming, and more.