

Director's Report

May 2025

Arlington Heights Memorial Library

Spotlight



Drawn to the Library: Contest Celebrates Youth Artists

The library celebrated National Library Week last month by revealing the winners for the first-ever Love Your Library Bookmark Contest. Five winners were selected from more than 200 submissions received by local youth artists from School Districts 25 and 214. The winners were invited to the library's April Committee of the Whole meeting where Library Board President Amy Somary presented each winner with a certificate and printed copies of their winning bookmark.

"It was really fun for my daughter to enter and see her artwork displayed at the library and think about what she loves about reading and why she loves it," said Cherié Kientoff, whose daughter Selah was selected as one of the winners. ***"This combined two things she loves, reading and art."***

The winners of this contest were selected in five categories that were determined by grade. A panel of judges evaluated the designs and identifying information such as student name and school was withheld during judging. All the submissions were on display on the first floor in April and customers could pick up a printed winning bookmark to take home. Bookmarks are still available at the Checkout Desk while supplies last.

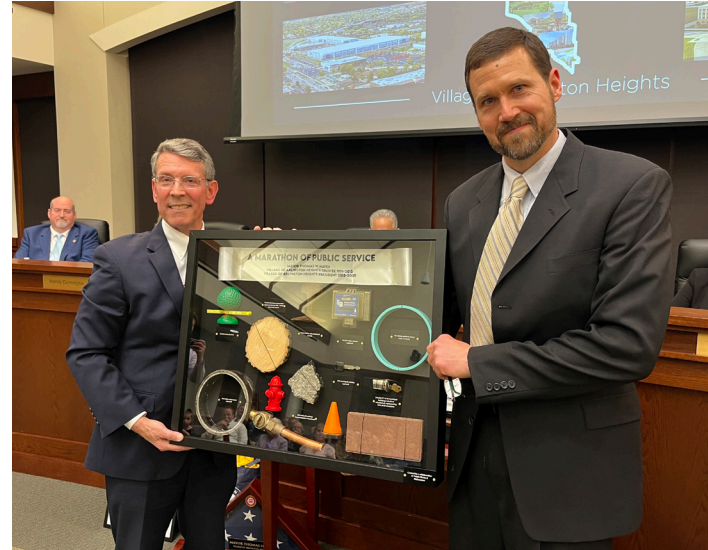
Special thanks to Lead Circulation Assistants Sam and Lindsay for leading the contest as well as staff from Communications & Marketing, Youth Services and Community & Circulation Services.



Strengthen the library's service outside its walls

Makerplace Helps Craft a Memorable Tribute for Mayor Tom Hayes

Makerspace Branch Assistant Manager Chris Krueger teamed up with Anthony and Chester from the Village of Arlington Heights Public Works. They used the Epilog laser cutter to make etched tags and the sublimation printer for a custom printed sash. These items were included in a shadow box that celebrated the outgoing Mayor Tom Hayes' accomplishments. The shadow box was presented to the mayor at the April Village board meeting.



AHML Hosts Staff & Residents from Lutheran Home

Senior & Accessible Services staff Renee and Katie led a tour of the library for 13 visitors from Lutheran Home, a senior living community in Arlington Heights. The highlight of the tour was visiting Kids' World, where they played with the dollhouse, Everbright wall, magnetic table and interactive floor playground, sparking fond memories and inspiring new activity ideas for the Lutheran Home staff. ***"Thank you so much for having us, the residents are still talking about it and others are now wanting to go. Many said they could have stayed at the library all day! The visit gave us many ideas for how we can incorporate play, games and other activities into our programming."***

AHML Continues to Build Upon Partnerships

Arlington Heights Senior Center

Senior & Accessible Services (SAS) Manager Katie and Advisor Kathryn presented information and answered questions about the library's services for 85 attendees at the Aging in Arlington Heights panel discussion and resource fair. In addition, SAS staff participated in a resource event at Beverly Lanes Bowling where 32 attendees learned about the Senior Center's services and programs.



District 25

Circulation Assistant Denise and Material Handling Assistants Nelly and Donna welcomed five students from Greenbrier Elementary School for World of Work. The students searched for "planted" misfiled holds, checked in returned items, shelved holds and helped customers at the drive-up window. At the end of their visit, they received goody bags, including official welcome certificates signed by the team.

District 214

Over the past few years, Hub user Rupsa has asked Youth Services staff to set up a collection for cereal boxes for the Rolling Meadows High School BookBinders Club. The club writes, illustrates and produces books to give to kindergarten and first graders. Since encouraging and supporting teen leadership and interests are at the core of teen services, the library happily hosts the collection box each spring. ***"We had a***



successful Annual Read-Aloud at John Jay Elementary School today, and the 115 students were overjoyed with the books and our narrations, which wouldn't have been possible without your partnership," said Rupsa and Mika, BookBinders Club Co-Presidents.

The Empty Corner

Programs & Exhibits Specialist Neal hosted the April session of Vinyl Listening Party at The Empty Corner, engaging 18 music enthusiasts at this fun, BYOB event. Attendees shared personal stories behind their song selections, creating a vibrant, nostalgic atmosphere and, as always, a Spotify playlist of the night's songs was shared following the event.

GOAL

Social

The new series of programs for 20s & 30s continued with Pizza, Pop, Vacation where 21 attendees joined Programs & Exhibits Coordinator Nikki, Readers' Advisor Danielle and Acquisitions Assistant Alex to enjoy pizza and discuss their favorite vacations and trade recommendations for future travel. This program marked the first with new local partner Cocial, a flexible office, community and private event space in Downtown Arlington Heights.

Northwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Community Engagement Liaison Catalina and Info Services Advisor Diane introduced the Makerplace to members of the Northwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Fifteen members received a tour, learned about business services and networked with each other.



AHML Engages Community in Places Where Customers Are



- Closing out another season of supporting the Arlington Heights Park District's after-school program Children at Play (CAP), Youth Services staff shared the book *I'm Not Just a Scribble* by Diane Alber with their sites and encouraged participants to create their own scribbles. These artistic pieces are now in the Kids' World display case in honor of Children's Book Week. For this display, students from the Olive, Recreation Park, ARC, Westgate and Greenbrier CAP sites were invited to participate.
- Community & Circulation Services staff members Mary and Dodie and Digital Services Advisor Chris engaged 283 participants at Harper College's STEM Fair for the first time. They showcased the library's technology services, including the button-making machine and virtual reality equipment available through the Library of Things collection.



Illinois Libraries Present Attracts Largest Statewide Audience This Season



Programs & Exhibits Manager Jennifer Czajka coordinated Illinois Libraries Present's April program, The Art of Foraging with Alexis Nikole Nelson, which attracted over 2,160 attendees with more than 60 registered from Arlington Heights. Best known as The Black Forager on social media, Nelson was joined by Natalie Evans, a wild edible foods instructor who has presented previously at the library.

Staff Give Back Through Community Meal Prep

In collaboration with the Dunton Street Social Club, a group of library staff who plan social activities to engage library staff, Community Engagement Liaison Catalina and Programs & Exhibits Specialist Neal co-hosted the first all-staff PADS Meal Prep event. Fourteen staff members volunteered their time to prepare meals for the PADS site at First Presbyterian Church, building community and camaraderie while supporting a vital local service.

Staff Highlights from Outside the Library Walls

- Info Services Manager Jolie Duncan was selected to serve on the PLA (Public Library Association) conference planning committee. Over the next year, she will work with librarians nationwide to select presentations and content for the 2026 PLA conference.
- Info Services Librarian Lynnanne was one of the moderators for Library Journal's Spring Day of Dialogue. Day of Dialogue is an all-day virtual conference sponsored by Library Journal that offers an in-depth look at the biggest forthcoming books for summer/fall 2025.



- Info Services Librarian Barb worked with the Business Interest Group (BIG)/Financial Fitness committee to present a series of three personal finance programs on Zoom to 1,648 attendees. The committee worked together for several months and was comprised of five area librarians. The three programs were: Planning for Retirement, Navigating Student Loans and Terry Savage Talks Money.



Grow the use of our services and resources

AHML Engages the Community Through Programs & Experiences at the Library

- Arlington Heights resident Sunny Amirpour led 23 adults in learning about toxins and hidden dangers in household cleaners and materials, after which they each made their own environmentally friendly cleaners in glass bottles. Sunny is also one of 24 influencers selected to be featured in the year-long local influencers book display on the first floor.
- Programs & Exhibits Specialist Neal welcomed back Clarence Goodman for The Glorious Arts: Chicago as a Fine Arts Mecca. This engaging program offered 31 lovers of art and architecture a fresh and compelling look at Chicago's often overlooked role in the fine arts world.
- To mark the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, Senior & Accessible Services Advisor Jessica hosted a special session of the weekly Current Events group where 32 attendees engaged in a lively discussion on diplomacy's role globally and locally. Participants emphasized the value of the weekly program as an opportunity for in-person dialogue to share ideas, build understanding and find common ground despite differences.



April Brings Spring-Themed Programs to the Library

Annual Seed Swap

The annual Seed Swap marks the beginning of a season of monthly swaps outside the Dunton entrance. Over 65 swappers attended, alongside the library's master gardener, John, who was available to share information and answer gardening questions.

Spring Gardening Program

Programs & Exhibits Assistant Jay hosted Your Landscape in the Spring: Cleanup and Prep for the Growing Season presented by University of Illinois Extension master gardeners. Over 95 attendees learned what they can and shouldn't do now to optimize success with their landscape and gardening goals for the growing season.





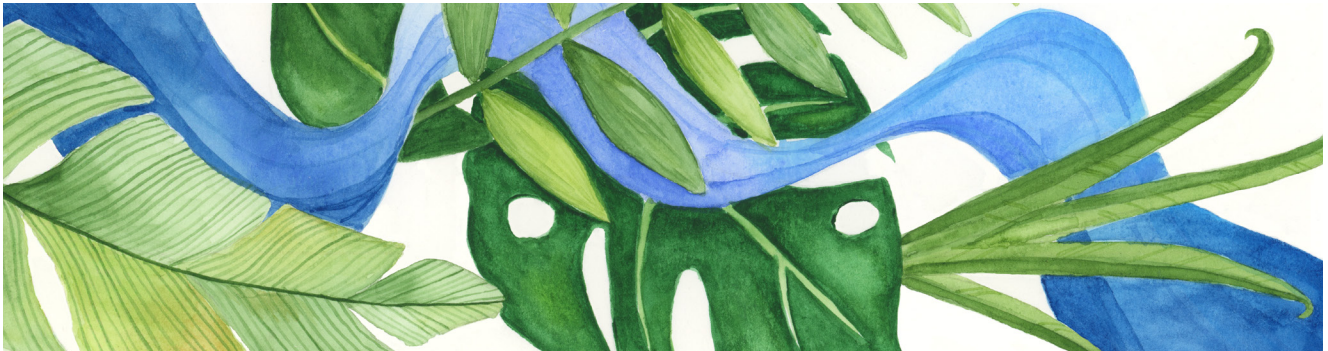
Enhance the library's role in the everyday lives of the Arlington Heights community

Successful Tax Services Season Wraps Up

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) volunteers completed 668 tax preparations this year from February 3–April 14 which is a 15% increase over 2024 appointments and the highest number since the library started offering the service.

Between January–April the Tax Information page on the library's website received 2,896 views. The tax table on the first floor was up from January 28–April 19. During that time, staff distributed 6,682 federal tax and state tax forms in addition to forms printed by Info Services staff for customers. The self-print station was available from January 28–April 19, where customers printed about 4,500 sheets.

AHML Celebrates Earth Month



Craft Swap

Makerspace Specialist Lisa coordinated the Makerplace's fourth annual Craft Swap. Over two weeks, Lisa and the Makerplace volunteers collected approximately 237 cubic feet of donated craft supplies including fabric, yarn, jewelry supplies and sewing patterns. Over 130 residents donated, granting them early access to the swap 30 minutes before it opened to the public.

This free event connected Makerplace customers with free arts and crafts supplies and prevented these supplies from ending up in a landfill. Over 70 attendees took advantage of early entry and over 120 attendees participated in the swap. Leftover supplies were donated to Greener Good and Goodwill in Arlington Heights.





Sensory Play

Eighty-five customers celebrated Earth Day by exploring fun sensory activities, including mud painting, flower soup and homemade playdough with nature stampers.



Climate Cafe

Similar to the library's long-running Death Cafe, Climate Cafes offer an opportunity to speak openly about climate anxiety—a topic that can be heavy and emotional. Five attended the discussion, all of whom reported they were so grateful for the space and camaraderie, agreeing they had “found their people.” The program was facilitated by Marilee Feldman of Life Counseling with Programs & Exhibits Manager Jennifer Czajka.

Makerplace Fosters Community Connection & Inspires Creativity Through Experiences


- The Makerplace is supporting community engagement through various activities. A local quilting group began meeting at the Makerplace after Joann's closure, where members learned about the free motion quilting machine and other resources. Additionally, Makerspace Specialist Kate developed an Intro to Crochet class in response to high community demand, with 10 attendees and a waitlist of over 40. These initiatives support hands-on experiences and tailored programs for the community.



- Chef Brian hosted his new Biscuits and Gravy class where participants learned to make this American breakfast classic from scratch while picking up general cooking techniques. The recurring Knife Skills class focused on proper knife handling, cutting various produce and knife care. During the Talk & Taste program, Chef Brian demonstrated how to make and peel hard-boiled eggs easily and how to dye them using natural kitchen items.


- Digital Services & Makerplace Advisor Beth led the Design It, Make It series which is a Digital Services class designed to bridge the services between the main library and the Makerplace. Attendees created a design in the Tech Learning classroom on April 23 and then met up at the Makerplace on April 30 to learn how to sublimite the design on to a mug. Customers had ***“fun designing a mug and learning about using Canva and appreciated having the “hands on ability to create mug after overview of process with support from instructor”.***

What Customers Are Saying




"I appreciate the topic and information provided! This program was very helpful and the presenter [Teri Kmak] was kind and engaging."

-Potty Training Your Child Virtual Attendee




"Eunice was so kind and extremely thorough and helped me to understand my issue with the website. She went out of her way to help me and suggested an interlibrary loan and put a request through for me so very quickly! Appreciate her so much!"

-Chat Service Customer




"Every month Makerplace provides wonderful creative projects and the finest teachers!"

-Inspired by Art Attendee



"AHML is the best - great services and programs - Thank you!"

-Landscape in Spring Attendee



"Ms. Allison is absolutely wonderful! It was a blessing and a joy seeing her every week, as she is so kind, caring, patient, and knowledgeable. The library is fortunate to have someone of her caliber!"

-Play, Learn & Grow Workshop Attendee