

Director's Report

January 2026

Arlington Heights Memorial Library

Spotlight

December 2025 Marks the Makerplace's Busiest December Ever

December 2025 was the busiest December in Makerplace history and the second-highest month on record for equipment usage. The Makerplace welcomed over 1,500 visitors, and staff answered more than 1,800 reference questions, reflecting exceptionally strong community engagement, learning and hands-on activity. Seasonal interest in making, paired with ongoing personal and collaborative projects, helped sustain steady use throughout the month.

Nearly 1,000 materials were purchased by makers at the Makerplace for their creations including 332 buttons, 119 sheets of embroidery stabilizer, 102 mugs and 40 laser-etched pint glasses. High number of purchased materials also resulted in strong usage in advanced tools and fabrication including 390,000 embroidery stitches, 3,375 grams of 3D printer filament and 534 inches of sticker printing.

Seasonal services also enhanced customer experience by offering a free gift box with purchase of a sublimation mug which helped customers leave with fully packaged, gift-ready creations. A holiday gift-wrapping pop-up proved especially popular, with many customers even bringing gifts from home to take advantage of wrapping tools and space.

Participation growth continued as 94 new users signed equipment waivers, expanding the number of customers able to work independently. The Makerplace's impact was also recognized in a *Daily Herald* article last month coordinated by the Communications & Marketing team which highlighted how community members used makerspaces to create custom holiday gifts. Overall, the month's record activity and media attention underscore the Makerplace's role as a key hub for creativity, skill-building and community connection.





Strengthen the library's service outside its walls

Library Continues to Build Upon Partnerships

Children's Advocacy Center

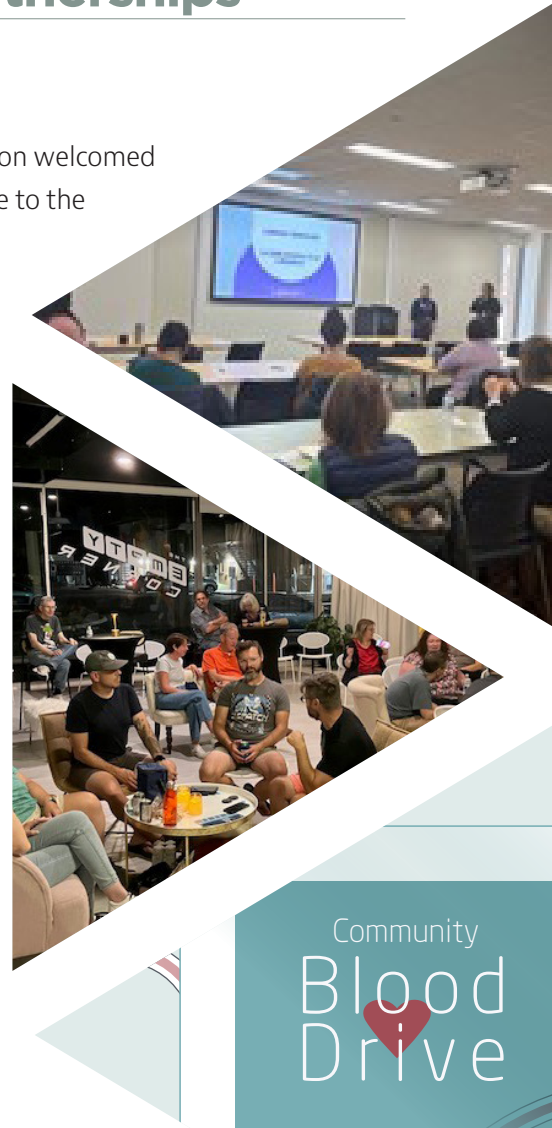
Community Engagement Supervisor Catalina and Early Learning Librarian Allison welcomed community coalition Children's Advocacy Center's Safe from the Start Initiative to the library. This coalition brings together early intervention service providers and organizations in the northwest suburbs, led by the Children's Advocacy Center in Arlington Heights. Catalina and Allison highlighted library collections and services relevant to participants' clients.

Empty Corner

Programs & Exhibits' Neal and Jay wrapped a successful year of Vinyl Listening Nights at Empty Corner, strengthening community amongst music lovers across generations. The Empty Corner remains an outstanding partner, offering inviting space to enjoy music, community and BYOB drinks.

Versiti

The Community & Circulation Services team wrapped up another successful year of the library's bimonthly community blood drives partnership with Versiti. Last month, 19 community members rolled up their sleeves to help save lives. In total for 2025, the community contributed 135 life-saving donations.



Staff Highlights from Outside the Library Walls

Info Services Manager Jolie Duncan participated in the Public Library Association (PLA) Scholarship Review Committee. This involved reviewing over 50 applications from around the country to award scholarships to attend the 2026 PLA Conference in Minneapolis.



Grow the use of our services and resources

Beloved LEGO® Train Exhibit Returns to the Library



Programs & Exhibits Coordinator Nikki brought back this beloved weekend-long exhibit, presented by the Northern Illinois LEGO® Train Club. The one-of-a-kind display fills Hendrickson Room with hundreds of thousands of LEGO® bricks and hundreds of custom and unique LEGO® builds by club members. Nearly 1,980 adults and children marveled at the whimsical creations, from cityscapes to a Blockbuster Video and featuring beloved characters like Spiderman and John McClane.

At-Capacity Crowd for Noon Year's Eve Program



Three hundred customers celebrated the end of the year and welcomed the new year at the library. Attendees were entertained with a balloon show by Smarty Pants and counted down to a balloon drop at noon. For those that were unable to attend due to limited capacity, a craft was available in Kids' World, engaging 90 additional customers.



Programs & Exhibits Reflects on Successful Inaugural 20s & 30s Series

Since launching in January 2025, the 20s & 30s series engaged 239 program attendees with 13 unique programs, nine of which were off-site. Staff across departments now collaborate to plan and host the events. 2026 will see the addition of a quarterly book discussion, just for adults age 18-39, and quarterly programs at Makerplace, just for younger adults.

Library Engages the Community Through Programs & Experiences



Best-Loved Stories & Songs of the Holidays

Singer and dramatist Jenny Riddle, joined by pianist Jeffrey Panko, delighted an audience of 64 with a festive program of holiday music interwoven with the stories behind many beloved songs. Audience members eagerly joined in the singing and later shared their appreciation for the beautiful presentation, rich with historical insight and engaging audience participation that made the experience especially enjoyable

Yeti Mountain Escape Room

Teens and tweens collaborated to solve puzzles and escape the Yetis on Mt. Arlington. Teen Librarian Alejandria and Youth Services Advisor Marie developed an engaging escape room where participants had to unlock the Yeti Virus antidote using blacklights to find hidden clues, decoding Morse code and more. Initially staff planned to deliver two sessions of the program but ended up adding two more due to high demand and full waitlists.



ESL Inaugural Writing Workshop

English as a Second Language (ESL) Advisor Brian wrapped up the library's inaugural five-part writing workshop last month. Student feedback made it clear that this was an important area for them to work on, and that Brian did a phenomenal job planning the sessions and delivering the content in a way that made students grow as writers.



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

Info Services Responds to Social & Economic Needs

Meet with a Career Coach

Last month, Info Services staff launched a new program where customers received a personalized 30-minute session with a career coach. In 2026, this program will be offered quarterly.

ICash Resource Hour

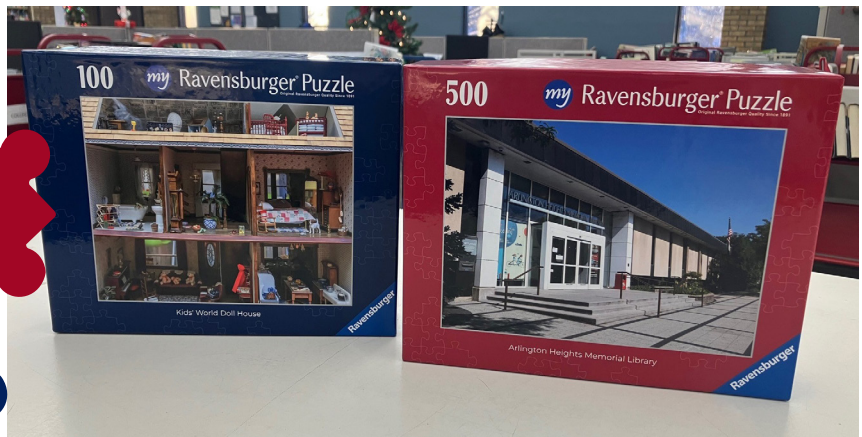
Last month, an ICash representative helped 11 customers find over \$40,000 in total in unclaimed money! An ICash representative is scheduled for four visits in 2026, and staff are considering adding more visits.

Social Worker in the Library

In 2025, Village of Arlington Heights Social Worker Darren Brown met with more than 80 customers in the library to provide local resources and referrals related to mental health, government programs and benefits, community programs and financial resources.

New Additions to Puzzle Collection

Two unique puzzles were added to the puzzle collection with a connection to the library. One is a picture of the front of the library and one is a picture of the dollhouse in Kids' World. Within 30 minutes of putting the puzzles out, the dollhouse puzzle was checked out! The puzzles were added in time for National Puzzle Month, which is in January.





Year-long Local Influencers Display Concludes with More Than 3,500 Checkouts




The year-long local influencers display featured 24 influencers with 154 titles and 3,526 checkouts. Collections Manager Lisa Bobis collaborated with Community Engagement Supervisor Catalina Shin, Programs & Exhibits Manager Jennifer Czajka, their teams, and Info Services Advisor Diane Malik to host the library's first Influencers Reception in December. Eighteen influencers attended, and several mentioned how honored they were to be selected and how much they enjoyed seeing the other titles that influenced people.

Makerplace Fosters Community Connection & Inspires Creativity Through Experiences

- **Wigilia with Chef Grace:** Attendees learned about the cultural significance of the traditional Polish Christmas Eve meal and common foods served, alongside culinary demonstrations.
- **Talk & Taste with Chef Brian:** December's Talk & Taste featured a comparison of hot chocolate styles ranging from store-bought mixes to more elaborate versions inspired by recipes from Ina Garten.
- **Cookiefest:** Cookiefest returned for a second year, opening the Makerplace Kitchen to the public for holiday baking using Makerplace equipment. The program was expanded in multiple ways this year, with sessions offered on two different days, session length increased to two hours and all four kitchen tables available for group use during each session. Plans are in development to add a family-friendly session in the future.




What Customers Are Saying




"We just paid our tax bill, and I told my husband, 'We don't grumble about the library taxes, those go to the Makerplace!'"

-Makerplace Customer



"I was going to do this at Uncharted, but they charge \$10 and I said, I have a Makerplace! I am so going to have to tell the other moms about this."

-Makerplace Customer Engraving Water Bottles




"You offer so many things - movies, discussions, classes...it's hard to say what's missing. AHML is amazing. Keep up the great programs!"

-Art with Alayne Attendee



"I write to commend the Biography section. I never fail to find a good Bio there."

-Customer Feedback via Comment Card



"Wait, I can bring my gifts here and wrap them? This is amazing! I look forward to coming here every Thursday. Every town should have a Makerplace."

-Makerplace Customer Using the Gift Wrap Pop-up Table

Arlington Heights Memorial Library

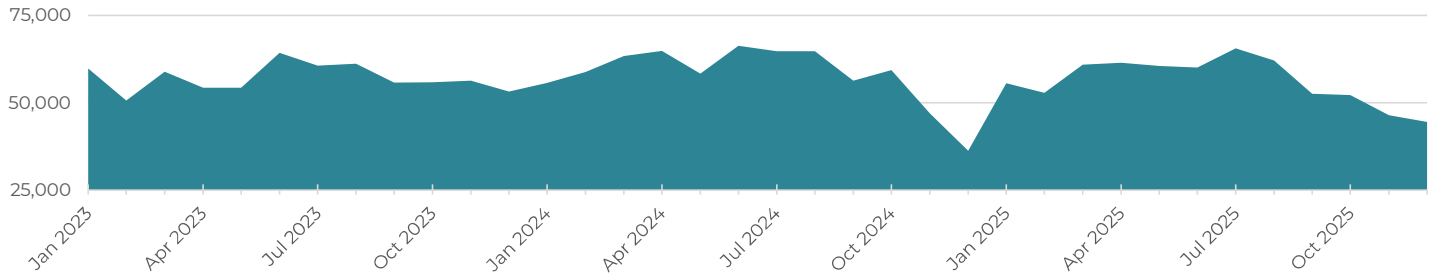
December 2025 Dashboard

Library Visits

78.9% of library customers in December visited the Main Library. Year to date, library visits are down -3%.

	December			2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Main Library	35,138	78.9%		525,195	552,021	-4.9%
Drive-Up	4,110	9.2%		55,556	61,106	-9.1%
Makerplace	1,530	3.4%		18,291	18,248	0.2%
Senior Center	1,458	3.3%		19,766	15,324	29.0%
Outreach	1,296	2.9%		30,200	23,156	30.4%
Bookmobile	1,015	2.3%		25,860	25,781	0.3%
Total	44,547	100%		674,868	695,636	-3.0%

Total Visits



Room Use	December	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change	Trend
Hendrickson Room	12	101	124	-18.5%	
Conference Rooms	1,169	12,699	15,087	-15.8%	
Total	1,181	12,800	15,211	-15.9%	January 2025-December 2025

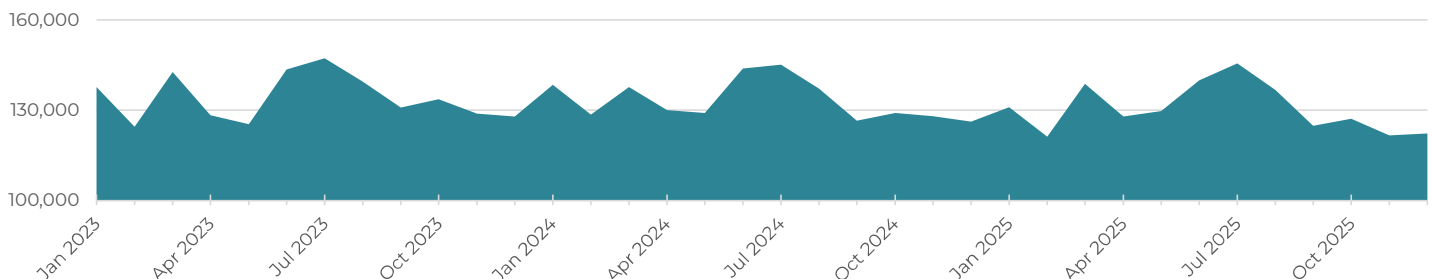
Library Cards ¹	December	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change	Trend
Resident	224	4,497	4,615	-2.6%	
Reciprocal	78	1,269	1,360	-6.7%	
Purchased	2	17	9	88.9%	
Total	304	5,783	5,984	-3.4%	January 2025-December 2025

Circulation

122,305 items were checked out in December. Year to date, total checkouts are down -2.1% compared to 2024.

	December			2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Print	67,771	55.4%		884,730	919,856	-3.8%
Downloadable	24,143	19.7%		297,201	279,318	6.4%
Audiovisual	20,927	17.1%		268,277	284,480	-5.7%
Other	9,464	7.7%		116,370	116,032	0.3%
Total	122,305	100%		1,566,578	1,599,686	-2.1%

Total Checkouts



¹ New cards only. Does not include renewals.

Arlington Heights Memorial Library

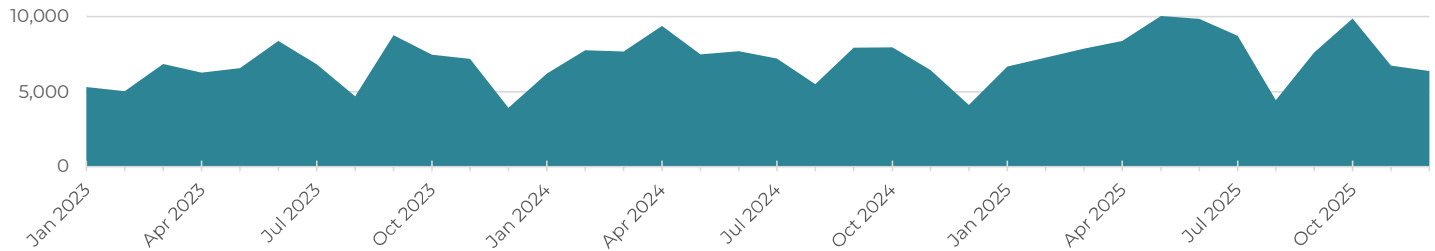
December 2025 Dashboard

Programs

3,227 customers attended Adult programs in December, which represents 50.6% of all program attendees. Year to date, program attendance is up 9.9% across all audiences and program sessions are up 4.8%.

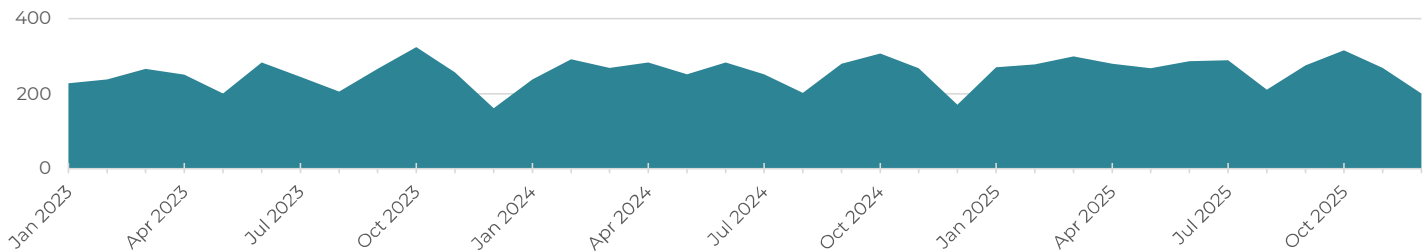
Attendance	December		2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Adult	3,227	50.6%	39,113	37,715	3.7%
Children	1,974	30.9%	47,361	43,108	9.9%
Teen	1,179	18.5%	7,362	4,553	61.7%
	6,380	100%	93,836	85,376	9.9%

Attendance



Sessions	December		2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Adult	127	63.2%	2,081	2,043	1.9%
Children	58	28.9%	976	860	13.5%
Teen	16	8.0%	188	194	-3.1%
	201	100%	3,245	3,097	4.8%

Sessions



Supplementary Programs and Activities²

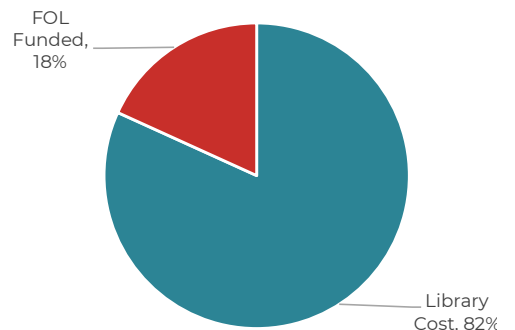
	December	Trend	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Attendance	10,241		64,409	45,340	42.1%
Sessions	30		262	259	1.2%

January 2025-December 2025

² Supplementary programs and activities are planned events where customers participate on their own, instead of at a designated time with a group. Registration is not required.

Program Spending

	December	2025 YTD	Budget	% Spent
Presenters	\$720	\$135,163	\$199,918	67.6%
Supplies ³	\$8,373	\$95,708	\$104,183	91.9%
	\$9,093	\$230,871	\$304,101	75.9%
Library Cost	\$8,408	\$188,855	\$256,601	73.6%
FOL Funded	\$684	\$42,016	\$47,500	88.5%
	\$9,093	\$230,871	\$304,101	75.9%



³ Includes supplies for supplementary programs and activities

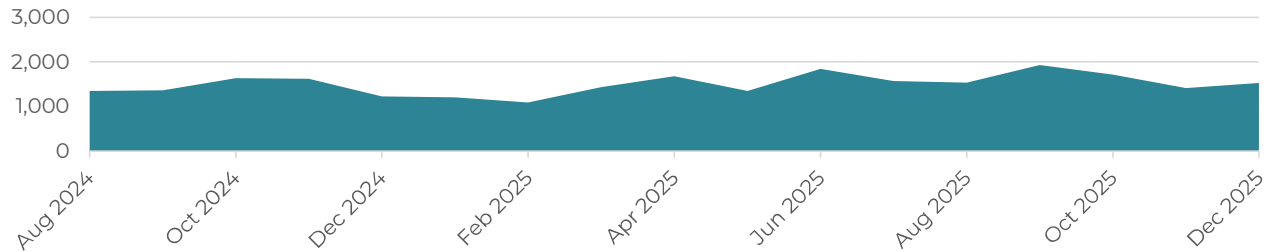
Arlington Heights Memorial Library Makerplace

December 2025 Dashboard

	December	% New Users	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Makerplace Visits	1,530	6.1%	18,291	18,248	0.2%

	New Users ⁴	December	% New Users	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Makerplace	67	71.3%	566	705	-19.7%	
Kitchen	13	13.8%	112	207	-45.9%	
Makerplace & Kitchen	14	14.9%	71	158	-55.1%	
Total	94	100%	749	1,070	-30.0%	

Total Visits



Equipment Usage ⁵	December		2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Fabrication	300	52.4%	2,209	2,591	-14.7%
Small Tools	118	20.6%	920	857	7.4%
Sewing	83	14.5%	869	840	3.5%
Technology	66	11.5%	325	456	-28.7%
Art	6	1.0%	94	47	100.0%
Total	573	100%	4,417	4,791	-7.8%

Program Attendance ⁶	December		2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
Culinary	135	100.0%	1,006	1,386	-27.4%
Maker	0	0.0%	1,450	1,508	-3.8%
Tour	0	0.0%	91	93	-2.2%
Other	0	0.0%	779	515	51.3%
Total	135	100%	3,326	3,502	-5.0%

	December	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
3D Print Jobs	116	2,165	1,834	18%

	December	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	Change
eLearning⁷	574	4,234	3,099	37%

⁴ Measured by number of waivers signed for maker/fabrication, kitchen, or both

⁵ **Fabrication**: all fabrication room equipment except 3D printers; **Small Tools**: soldering irons, hand tools; **Technology**: design computers

⁶ **Culinary**: kitchen programming; **Maker**: hands on making programs (3D printing, laser cutting, sewing); **Tour**: attendance of facility tours prescheduled or drop-in

⁷ Niche Academy views of Makerplace resources