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What Would a Day Without Libraries Look Like?

By Ari Z. Brooks, Executive Director

Everyone should support libraries—that’s a no brainer. You might already think that libraries play an important role in your life, and you might even support them through donations or volunteerism, but in order to completely understand how libraries benefit our society, our culture, our education, *and even our health*, I want you to take a moment to imagine just what life would be like without them.

This exercise takes me back to when I was an undergrad at the University of Virginia and saw for the first time “A Day Without Art,” which was a global campaign for AIDS awareness. It was more than a fundraiser; organizers would cover up all of the artwork, statues, and paintings around the Grounds in order to foster AIDS education and fight prejudice.

“What’s the purpose of all this?” I first wondered, eyeing the paintings hidden behind a cloth in the student union. But as I walked around, I felt a shiver. Without art, the University didn’t seem as welcoming; it certainly wasn’t as beautiful. My day didn’t *feel* the same. I started thinking about how many voices had been silenced by AIDS and how they’d never be able to add their contribution to this world. I truly felt the loss.

The organizers were on to something: Only when you take something away can you sense the depth of the void. When the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered the physical library building, for example, we saw how many people depend on libraries, not only for books but also for computers, for meetings, for a safe space as well as for a sense of community. Just like with art, libraries serve not only to enrich life as we know it—they also act as a necessity.

Now think for a moment what would happen if you were to take away everything FOLMC did for a day in the library:

- You wouldn’t see the colorful ABC123 carpet in the Children’s room
- You wouldn’t have the puzzles, games, or the LEGOs for MCPL STEM programs
- There wouldn’t be as extensive a LGBTQIA+ collection or programing to discover and experience
- You wouldn’t have the breadth and variety of workforce development, expert-led programing
- There wouldn’t be author events that reflect Montgomery County’s diverse communities

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What Would a Day Without Libraries Look Like? *continued*

- You wouldn't see the Mosaic Creative Writing Program anthologies of short stories, essays, and poetry by middle school student authors that let them feel proud of their culture and who they are.

Just imagine everything the library *wouldn't* have without FOLMC. It wouldn't have DVDs if we hadn't given MCPL the seed money back in the 1990s. It wouldn't have the option of the self-checkout machines we use today. It wouldn't have music.

Remember Storytimes back in the cassette tape era? The children's librarian could stop the cassette, talk for a bit, and then hit play again. When iPods first came out, we piloted them to cue the music, and now we're helping to introduce Soundtrack Your Brand, an App that lets MCPL stream 58 million licensed songs, during in-person and virtual Storytimes.

Speaking of technology, we provided funding for the Digital Media Lab at Long Branch and piloted SMART Rooms at Gaithersburg and Olney. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we funded the Zoom license that allowed MCPL to continue to host programming—in a virtual format.

Libraries help us stay relevant. Their collections change often to reflect our world. FOLMC has been there every step of the way for MCPL, funding everything from Hatha yoga classes to hands-on science demonstrations, performances by Grammy-nominated artists, knitting clubs, financial literacy groups, and swashbuckling animal puppet shows.

With FOLMC's help, there is *always* something new in the library, which gives visitors a reason to be excited, and to come back again soon.

Without FOLMC, the library simply wouldn't be the same. It would be less alive, less hopeful—it's a scenario we never, ever want to see happen. So, please help us do your part to ensure that MCPL will always have FOLMC around by joining or renewing your membership today.



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Book Lovers Auction

October 16-22, 2022

Learn more at www.folmc.org

From the desk of Executive Director, Ari Z. Brooks



I recently traveled back to my alma mater for a reunion with my roommates. With health and safety at top of mind, we skipped the school's formal reunion and met up during the summer, when the Grounds were quiet.

There were five of us in total, and even though life, careers, and families had pulled us in different directions, all these years we stayed in touch.

This time around, the art displayed around the University included a huge chunk of the Berlin Wall—I don't know if you've been to Berlin recently, but it's surprising how little of the original Wall is actually left. One of my roommates, who now lives in Germany, had encountered some major transportation issues when her connecting flight to Dulles was canceled, so she enthusiastically told us she had to drive from Rhode Island to Boston, catch a flight to Philadelphia, a train to Union Station, and an Uber to Dulles, where her rental car was waiting, so she could drive to UVA—just so she could see a piece of the Wall (and us, of course!).

Humor aside, seeing each other again was joyful. It just felt good knowing how after all these years we all were still the same.

Our Mission

Strengthen, promote, and champion Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), for it to better serve the learning interests and needs of the diverse and changing communities of the County.

And that's just how it is with FOLMC. We were founded in 1982 but forty years later, we're still aligned with our mission, because it's an emblem of our core purpose. Stanford University's Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society recently outlined the characteristics behind a well-honed mission statement, and I'm proud to say ours passes muster: Our mission is focused. It solves unmet public needs. It leverages unique skills, and it inspires—and is inspired by—key stakeholders. Our mission anticipates change. And it sticks in your memory, doesn't it?

My oldest friends are some of my dearest friends because they have stayed true to themselves, and we've grown up together. Likewise, FOLMC's mission to support MCPL won't change, ever, not even through difficult and turbulent times. That's why I invite you to join our efforts to support MCPL so that we can keep providing the knowledge, resources, meaning, and inspiration to all in our community. Thank you, now and always, for your help.

See page five (5) for the Summer Snapshot featuring funding from this Summer.

FOLMC Wins Board Leadership Award

By Pamela H. Saussy, President



I am thrilled to announce that FOLMC is this year's winner of the Board Leadership Award from the Center for Nonprofit Advancement. Our Board of Trustees is a dedicated group of working and retired professionals who have a passion for Montgomery County Public Libraries.

This highly competitive award distinguishes those Boards that go above and beyond recommended standards and fundamentals to bring new levels of leadership to their role, resulting in positive changes and notable successes for their organizations. To win the award, all candidates must go through an extensive selection process that includes nominations, interviews, and final site visits. This team effort reflects so well on the engagement and energy of our Board, and the expertise and talent of the FOLMC staff. A key element of our win was our response to the "teachable moment" question, which focused on our recent decision to switch from a chapter-based volunteer model to ONE FOLMC. We also highlighted our innovative approach to engaging Student Trustees and our inclusive Board recruitment process as part of our application.

A big thanks also to our Executive Director, Ari Brooks, who assisted in this effort. She was gratified to see the efforts of the Board validated for tough decision-making to ensure the long-term viability of the organization.

You can learn more about the competitive selection process at www.nonprofitadvancement.org.



You're Invited to a Book Lovers Auction

Join us this October for FOLMC's first-ever Book Lovers Auction! Due to the popularity of our past two virtual Library After Dark galas, and inspired by the fun we all had with the online auctions, this year, we decided to host an auction entirely dedicated to the bibliophile in all of us.

The Book Lovers Auction will be held in celebration of National Friends of Libraries Week from Sunday, October 16 through Saturday, October 22. Its goal is to raise funds for FOLMC to support Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL).

The auction is your chance to bid on signed first-edition and vintage books, fun, bookish-themed items (like prints, chocolates, and candles), kid's baskets and a variety of upscale experiences, such as theater tickets and even vacation rentals. The auction will take place for an entire week online from Sunday, October 16 through Saturday, October 22 at <https://go.rallyup.com/folmc/Campaign>, so be sure to bookmark that page.

In addition, you can preview auction items from October 1-15. Bids can be placed beginning at 10:00 AM on Sunday, October 16 through 11:59 PM on Saturday, October 22—and not a second later!

FOLMC is looking forward to making this auction a success and, as always, we welcome all in our Montgomery County community—and beyond—to join us in support of our local libraries. Visit www.folmc.org for complete details or to make an additional donation.



GABBY RIVERA
FRIDAY, OCT 21
7 PM | A VIRTUAL EVENT

Join us for an online discussion with Gabby Rivera, LGBT Activist, creator of *Marvel's America* & author of *Juliet Takes a Breath*.

Register at www.folmc.org

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Office of Council Vice President Evan Glass

A Note from MCPL Director Anita Vassallo



Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), like most public and private entities worldwide, has faced many challenges since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the contribution of every single member of our dedicated staff, collaboration with our partners, and support from Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, MCPL continues to build back.

We were able to accomplish many great things in fiscal year 2022, which closed on June 30. Here are some of our highlights:

- Transitioned to Aspen Discovery, a brand-new library catalog providing customers with a new suite of features and a better online experience.
- Reopened two refreshed branches – Germantown Library on October 16, 2021 and Maggie Nightingale (Poolesville) on May 21, 2022, and closed the Potomac Library on May 22, 2022, to begin its refresh.
- Began offering the Maryland Day by Day Family Literacy Activity Calendar, which provides daily educational activities for parents and caregivers to do with their children to get them ready to succeed in school.
- Installed outside tables and seating on the plaza of Long Branch Library, allowing for greater use of the area, including outdoor programming.
- Kicked off Library Lovers Month with a special program featuring Maynard Okereke, the Hip Hop M.D., who presented an ocean-themed virtual STEM program.

- In February 2022, expanded hours of service beyond pre-pandemic levels to include Sundays.
- On February 28, 2022, the last day of Black History Month, County Executive Marc Elrich signed an executive order that enabled the County to rename the Silver Spring Library to the Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library.
- With assistance from the County's Innovation Office and input from community members, customers and staff, drafted MCPL's new 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.
- Summer Reading Challenge! began on June 15, 2022. This year's theme is "Oceans of Possibilities." An indoor-outdoor kick-off event held on June 18 was attended by more than 2,500 people. In less than a week, almost 5,000 children and teens signed up, and the numbers keep growing.
- MCPL ended FY22 with a bang – setting a new record for circulation! With over 11.6 million items circulated, we surpassed our FY19 circulation numbers (FY19 was the first time MCPL had the highest circulation of all public library systems in Maryland).

I'm very proud to see how we have worked together, rebounded, and come back stronger from the obstacles of the past two and a half years.

Staff Spotlight: Grace Babbitt

Join us in welcoming Grace to FOLMC as our Administrative Coordinator.

How did you hear about FOLMC?

I heard about FOLMC through job searching. I knew exactly the types of places I wanted to work for, and I was fortunate enough that I could take my time to find the perfect fit.

What's a fun memory of a library?

I lived in Alaska when I was younger, and our school librarian would take us cross-country skiing once a week. I always thought she was the coolest! I was the resident bookworm and spent a lot of my recess time in the library, and our librarian always kept me up to speed with any books she thought I would like.

What do you like to read?

I like to consider my taste in books to be relatively diverse. I enjoy both fiction and non-fiction. Most recently I re-read *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders. I enjoyed his short stories, and his full-length novel did not disappoint! I have *All You Can Ever Know* by Nicole Chung waiting to be read on my desk, currently.

What are your other hobbies?

I am a huge movie buff. I'm so glad the movie theaters are open again! My husband and I are major foodies and love to try out new restaurants/recipes/snacks.

What do you like about it?

This is the first time I've really gotten to explore Montgomery County. I love how many amazing food options there are! I go to Rockville Memorial Library every week, so I've been treating myself after work with whatever is in the area. If anyone has recommendations, let me know!

What's a fun fact about you?

I have four pets. Two rabbits, Robert Smith and Blondie (full name is Debbie Hare-y), and two dogs, Ridley (after Ridley Scott) and Ruby.

What do you enjoy most about FOLMC so far?

Knowing that my work helps accomplish something good for the community is the best feeling in the world.





FOLMC Sponsored Programs and Activities: Summer, 2022

For upcoming programs and events check out our calendar at folmc.org and follow us on social media. **Special thanks to our donors for your support funding these enhancements.**

June

Branch	Program Description
Chevy Chase	Virtual Gentle Hatha Yoga
Davis	Take & Make: fairy houses Take & Make: planting a seed STEM Programming with Science Connections
Damascus	Garden supplies
Gaithersburg	Piano tuning
Germantown	Children's Programming: Juneteenth with Ada Ari Books Children's magnetic foam letters Early literature cube for children's programming/streamers for display Summer Reading Challenge! Shark Week craft Children's room crayon holders
Little Falls	Literary Salons Garden supplies
Nightingale	Summer Reading Challenge! cart for gameboard organization Summer Reading Challenge! decorations/program materials
Noyes	STEM Take & Make kits STEM/Craft Program supplies
Praisner	Summer Reading Challenge! and Seasonal Take & Make kits Summer Reading Challenge! <i>partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation</i> Soundtrack Your Brand Trial for music to be played at various branches
Quince Orchard	Staff Appreciation Film Screening & Q/A of "Finding Fellowship"
Twinbrook	Educational toys
White Oak	Plexiglass dividers for staff work area Summer Reading Challenge! Scales & Tales with Patapsco State Park

* Potomac Library is currently closed for refresh.

July

Branch	Program Description
Brig. Gen. Charles E. McGee	Binary code bracelet program Summer Reading Challenge! Fish Craft supplies Valentine's program
Chevy Chase	Virtual Gentle Hatha Yoga New Carpet for Children's programming
Connie Morella	Garden supplies
Kensington Park	Garden Story Trail
Olney	Summer Reading Challenge! H2-OH! Magic Show with Mike Rose
Rockville Memorial	Summer Reading Challenge! DIY Mini Beach Terrarium Art Program "Poppies like O'Keeffe" Craft Programs
Twinbrook	Family STEAM program
Wheaton	Summer Reading Challenge! Under the Sea with Andrew Wilson
White Oak	Summer Reading Challenge! H2-OH! Magic Show with Mike Rose
Quince Orchard	Summer Reading Challenge! Shark Week fossils

August

Branch	Program Description
Aspen Hill	Children's area updates (bulletin board/cabinet)
Chevy Chase	Virtual Gentle Hatha Yoga
Damascus	Summer Reading Challenge! with Two of a Kind
Davis	Summer Reading Challenge! Shark Hand Puppet project Summer Reading Challenge! with Two of a Kind Summer Reading Challenge! Science Connections
Germantown	Summer Reading Challenge! with EnviroDrum Children's library card sign-up month craft
Kensington Park	Drag Queen Story Hour with Charlemagne Chateau Program supplies Four Zumba classes Summer Reading Challenge! with the National Aquarium
Little Falls	Children's Craft program Science in the Summer: Be a Biologist
Long Branch	Summer Reading Challenge! Summer Craft
Nightingale	Poolesville Day Staff Appreciation Children's/Teen programming Summer Reading Challenge! Shark Week
Olney	Science in the Summer: Be a Biologist
Quince Orchard	Summer Reading Challenge! with the National Aquarium Summer Reading Challenge! with the Science Guys of Baltimore
Rockville Memorial	Summer Reading Challenge! Signs Under the Sea with Stories by Hand
Wheaton	Summer Reading Challenge! with Two of a Kind
White Oak	Summer Reading Challenge! with Oak Rhythmaya Dance

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