

Fall - Winter 2020

Our Spring Sales were canceled but ...

Yes, we still have books for you

By Martha Linne, Book Sale Chair

Well, this has been the strangest seven or eight months I've ever experienced! The one thing I didn't have to worry about when the library was closed for over half that time was running out of books. I was certainly able to make some progress with the ones I've not had time to read and had been stockpiling.

And now, looking ahead, I fear we may be in for a rough winter. If you're like me, my Friends, you need to be sure of enough reading material to last through the dark months ahead.

I have a suggestion! I know our Children's Used Book Sale and our Annual Used Book Sale had to be canceled, but our ongoing Friends Book Store sale is open, whenever the Hughes Library is open, with a great selection of both fiction and nonfiction. You can use it to replenish your supply of children's and young adult books, cookbooks, and higher priced books, too.



In addition, because of the unknowns surrounding our 2021 sales, we are displaying some of our newest fiction (priced higher) for your perusal. We also have mystery bundles of books in various genres.

Your support of this sale (and the soon to be available sale at the new Smithfields branch) enables the Friends to help EMPL with a variety of needs. With the loss of funds from the canceled sales, it's needed more than ever.

We can't know what lies ahead in this strange time, but in the best of all circumstances, we can dream of having our Children's Used Book Sale the last weekend in April (the 24th and 25th) and the Annual Used Book Sale beginning on May 29th. My fingers are crossed! And my bookshelves are well stocked.



The Library of the Smithfields

By Ann Super, Board of Trustees President and Friends Board Member

Well, we are not where we wanted to be by now. We anticipated that by now we would be working our fall programming for our patrons. We had hoped by now that our Grand Opening would be a past event. Unfortunately, life had other plans. Due to the global pandemic we were forced to close, construction was at a standstill and everything was put on hold. Since the summer, as soon as construction bans were lifted, work resumed on the Middle Smithfield Township Community and Cultural Center in Echo Lake Park. Completion of the library was given the highest priority and we are moving right along.

The moving company recently moved most of our items from the former Smithfield library that were stored at Hughes branch into the new library space. Unfortunately, we had to move the Smithfield library furnishings twice. It was too expensive to continue to lease our former space in Smithfield township. As the library was closed anyway due to the COVID-19 restrictions, it was fiscally prudent to store everything at Hughes. Even with the phased reopening, we were able to store everything safely and our creative staff made everything work.

We can use everything that was in our Smithfield library and are getting a few more items. A special thanks to the Friends for a generous grant of \$50,000.

This will be used to pay our moving expenses, purchase necessary items, and help pay down the loan we secured to open this library. Additionally, the



Monroe County Bar Foundation gave us a \$4,500 grant which will enable us to buy the following:

- A Rainwise weather station with inside monitor that will be linked to the Weather Underground network. This will be used to teach classes about the weather and provide real time data.
- Flat Panel Spider TV Cart with 80" TV monitor. The cart features a locked storage cabinet that can store a computer, DVD player, cords, and

cabling. This mobile station will provide flexibility for use throughout the library.

- Conference table: 4-piece flipper table that can be moved or folded for additional programming. This creates additional opportunities for the conference room as well as flexibility.

All these combined, will empower us to make this an amazing library.



So, when will we be open? Soon. The flooring is almost finished and the shelving is being installed. Then the books will put on the shelves and we are closer to GO! After the books are shelved, we will then move in computers, plants, art etc. Those are the little touches that will make it a welcoming place.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Fall. Thank you all for your continued support of the libraries during this unprecedented time. No one thought that 2020 would be what it has evolved to be. This year has taught me to take time to enjoy the community we live in and what it has to offer, as well as read more books.

Reading has always been a way I can escape to a different place. I started a few new series of books and it has really helped me to have a feeling of normalcy. It was also a great way to find new authors.

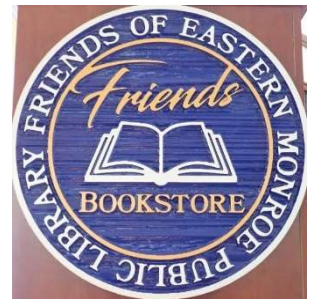
Unfortunately we had to cancel the children's and the regular book sales this year. Planning is

underway for 2021. We are still selling books within the Hughes library, so please stop by the next time you are in the library.

While many of us are excited for this year to end, I challenge each of you to find something good that came out of this year. We are excited that the new Smithfield Library will be opening soon. Because of your continued support we were able to give the new library \$50,000 for expenses.

I hope you and your family members have a safe and happy holiday season.

Cathleen Conway



Smithfields *(continued)*

Our next step will be securing a temporary Certificate of Occupancy which will allow staff to work there. We will get a permanent Certificate of Occupancy when the building is completely finished. Hopefully in November, we will do curbside pickup and then before too long a soft opening. Patience and perseverance have been the key throughout this entire process. But the end is in sight.

We still need your help and support. To make this \$1 million investment, we had to borrow money and draw down from our reserves. Our goal is to repay the loan as soon as possible to have funds available for other important initiatives.

As you can imagine, this year's plans for any fundraisers were thwarted. Any donation helps but these are some levels of recognition we have established:

Silver: \$1,000 to \$4,999. Recognition on the Founders' Tree in the new library.

Gold: \$5,000 to \$10,000. Recognition on Founders' Tree and a named library shelf.

Platinum: \$10,000+. In addition to Gold recognition, there are naming opportunities within the library.

Donations by check can be mailed to Eastern Monroe Public Library, 1002 North Ninth Street, Stroudsburg, PA 18360. Credit card donations can be made at the donation tab at <https://monroepl.org/> All donations are gratefully accepted.



From the Director:

Public Libraries in the Pandemic

By Susan Lyons, EMPL Director

I remember clearly the day the pandemic became real for me: Thursday, March 12th. In late February we adopted a one-page plan to prepare for a pandemic, though it seemed a distant threat. We bought extra gloves, Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer. Not a lot. Not nearly as much as I later wished we could have purchased, but an amount that seemed prudent at the time. Beginning in early March, staff members began wearing gloves when emptying the book drop and we started wiping down keyboards, handrails, tables, doorknobs, and the elevator buttons.

There were cases on cruise ships and on the West Coast. There was one case up in Wayne County but the threat still seemed distant. Then a patron came in whose wife worked at the hospital. He told us that there were eight new admissions for pneumonia and it became clear that the virus was spreading in Monroe County. The following day the governor shut down schools and libraries throughout the state.

It helped to have a plan in place. We reset book return dates, upgraded the Zoom account, setup a YouTube channel for Storytime and other Youth Services programming. We advertised our electronic resources to patrons and e-book and e-audiobook usage increased by 50% over last year. We decided to leave the WiFi on 24 hours a day. Arrangements were made to pick up the mail, schedule deliveries, pay bills, and meet payroll.

The pandemic shutdown highlighted the two functions of a public library: providing books and information to the community, and serving as a community center, a place filled with people from morning to evening, making connections, studying, reading, sipping coffee, or just hanging out.

I am proud of our staff for performing that first function so well. When our doors were locked, we circulated digital books and moved to online programming. As we moved into the Yellow phase, we began curbside distribution and then reopened our doors at Hughes

Library to allow patrons to browse the stacks and use library computers.


As public libraries navigate this pandemic interregnum, the challenge is to act in the moment and also imagine and plan for the future when we reach the new normal.

To address immediate needs, we sought and received a grant from the Pocono Mountain Community Fundraiser to lend WiFi hotspots. WiFi in the parking lot is okay, but WiFi at home is so much better. The Monroe County library directors decided to spend county coordination funds to purchase Brainfuse, a service that provides live online tutoring to students, and résumé and job coaching to adults. It also supports GED students, who have not been able to meet here for tutoring since mid-March.

For the future, we are making upgrades to the Hughes Library, thanks to a grant from the Hughes Foundation. We replaced flooring on the first floor and staircase and replaced the three oldest rooftop HVAC units. When meetings and gatherings and Storytime can safely return, the building will be ready.

One bright spot during 2020 has been watching the new Library of the Smithfields rise from a hole in the ground into a beautiful new library and community center. As I write this, shelving is being installed and next week we will begin reshelving 750 boxes of books.

Walking through the building and the grounds of Echo Lake Park, I can imagine the many opportunities for STEM programming in the park, and in the library as well, once we set up the new local weather station and other new technology that was funded by a grant from the Monroe County Bar Foundation.

I am grateful to the Friends of the Library for your support in building a permanent home for the Smithfields branch. Your support gives me hope and inspiration as we move toward that time when we can breathe easy and gather again. 

News from the Friends of the Eastern Monroe Public Library

Fall-Winter 2020

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Free Live Tutoring – Brainfuse

During this challenging academic year, the Public Libraries of Monroe County have purchased a subscription to [Brainfuse](https://www.brainfuse.com), an education company that offers free online tutoring to students from Kindergarten to 12th Grade. Additional resources are available for adult learners. All Monroe County Library cardholders can set up a free account.



[Brainfuse](https://www.brainfuse.com) offers live online tutoring everyday from 2 pm to 10 pm, plus:

- An extensive library of lessons, videos, and practice tests in all academic subjects
- Practice tests and preparation for exams, including the SAT, ACT, ASVAB, GRE, GMAT and others.
- A 24/7 Question Center – students submit questions that are answered within 24 hours.
- Online meeting rooms for student study groups
- Support for students studying a foreign language
- Online Flashcards in hundreds of subjects
- ESL instruction
- Digital literacy skills

Check it out at monroepl.org/?p=11238

Providing Library Service to Youth During a Pandemic

By Julie Bonser, Head of Youth Services

I sat on the floor of my home office surrounded by a pile of picture books, a rhythm scarf, and a ukulele. Small familiar faces appeared on my laptop that rested on a swivel chair in front of me. After a quick introduction and welcome song, I opened the first book. It was a sunny April morning and my first Zoom Storytime.

It had been six weeks since my last in-person Storytime. A group of wiggly preschoolers sat on the risers, including a little girl who once hugged me with such vigor that my chair rolled across the floor. The weekly theme was “hair” and included a silly song about a child getting a haircut and the unusual things that could be used, like a lawnmower or alligator. (Little did we know that after months of quarantine, those might become viable options.) After one final story and coloring sheet, we waved good-bye.

“Thanks for coming. See you next week,” I said.

Except we didn’t.

A few days later staff received notice that all Pennsylvania libraries would close for two weeks in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. Soon two weeks became a month, then two months, and like the rest of the world, we began to redefine our jobs as well as our lives.

Virtual Storytime is a much different experience than the in-person version. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom, it’s an online program that allows users to communicate real-time, usually with video. Our Storytime requires two staff members: a reader and a cohost. First the cohost mutes the children so they

can hear the reader. Next the reader is put on “spotlight,” which means the kids have a full-screen view of the librarian. That also means the librarian has a full-screen view of *herself* with a minimal view of the kids. Are they participating? Are they bored? Have they gone to the kitchen for a cookie? The reader

doesn’t know. She just speaks to the void and hopes someone is listening.

On the other hand, the cohost can see everything, including the sisters jumping on the couch in the middle of *The Wheels on the Bus*. At the end, we return to “gallery view,” unmute the children, and say good-bye. Occasionally the family cat will join us.



Julie Bonser assists patron Reese Parrish

The staff’s reaction after the first program? *That was weird*. We missed the live interaction with the children that makes a Storytime successful. On a positive note, it enabled us to discover new methods of communication in a Zoom-filled world, such as sign language applause.

The pandemic brought other additions to EMPL. In March we launched a YouTube channel which features stories, songs, book recommendations, and Yertle the Turtle walking in the woods. If you need a smile, watch Michelle’s reading of *There is a Bird on Your Head!* by Mo Willems.

The 2020 Summer Reading Program, *Imagine Your Story*, lacked excitement in a completely online format. Normally the library would host large programs such as magicians, science experiments, and live animals. This year we were forced to cancel performers or convert them to virtual programs.

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Here's a wonderful gift idea for your book loving friends ... or yourself! Discounted for the holidays at only \$50! Two colors of our famed Liztech pin are available. Ask at the circulation desk.



Youth Services (continued)

Children could still participate in summer reading by printing out a special BINGO card and completing twenty summer-based activities. After completion, they picked up a pre-made goodie bag, rather than searching through books and prize drawers.

We also made changes to the children's room in order to make it COVID-19 compliant. We removed the educational game computers, public toys, and select furniture, leaving a single chair at each table. The biggest challenge was finding a protective barrier for the Youth Services reference desk. We considered several options but finally decided on a canopy tent covered with clear shower curtain liners. We nicknamed it "the bubble" and it's pretty cozy. We may turn it into a cabana after the pandemic subsides.

You probably think I'm kidding.

Nowadays the Youth Services Department feels like a different world. Quieter. The tables are emptier. The shelves are fuller. There are no play dates or tutoring sessions or trucks racing on the play carpet. It's disheartening but at the same time, it means that the public is working to stay safe. Someday I trust the library will function as a community gathering place

once again. In the meantime, we are still here to provide information. We look forward to the day when kids can get together for a Storytime, read *Where the Wild Things Are*, and roar so loud that people hear it on the second floor.

Again, not kidding.

The EMPL virtual program schedule for kids and teens can be found on the scrolling announcements at www.monroepl.org. Programs are announced monthly. Keep scrolling for our newest database, Brainfuse, which features live homework help every day from 2-10 pm.

If you need materials, YS staff can gather books in advance to pick up at the circulation desk. If you are unable to wear a mask or prefer not to enter the building, please call ahead and we will make arrangements to bring materials to your car. Have your library card or photo ID ready.

For more information: 570-421-0800 x305 or youth@monroepl.org.

