

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

PIMA COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY 



## Vision

Our Vision is an educated, connected community of readers, learners, doers, and dreamers.

## Mission

We transform lives by educating, inspiring, and connecting people.

## Values

We value education, excellence, freedom, diversity, innovation, community, and passion.

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# Greatest Literature of All Time

by Holly Schaffer, Community Relations Manager

## We regularly “gloat” about the program

It's called GLOAT—short for Great Literature of All Times—and it's been an ongoing program at Oro Valley Public Library since 2002, when Dr. Bill Fry, a former longtime English teacher, presented a lecture on Edgar Allan Poe—complete with a bust of Poe. It's been going strong ever since. The program regularly attracts 60 to 100 attendees each month—including customers from the far eastside who trek across town to listen and join the conversation. In 2020, he presented Mark Twain: Father of Modern Comedy—it was **standing room only with 108 people in attendance!**

I had the opportunity to attend the program in March 2023. Dr. Fry had selected nature poets to welcome the arrival of spring. He opened the class by reading an *Arizona Daily Star* article about the super bloom happening in the western United States, including our beloved Picacho Peak, after a wet winter in 2022.

His words flowed smoothly as he discussed the work of author, poet, and essayist John Elder, “the definitive scholar,” as Dr. Fry noted. As he talked about Elder's work, participants eagerly took notes. He asked them to name some nature poets. Someone said Dickinson, to which Dr. Fry replies, Ah, Emily Dickinson, the love of my life.”

The program continues with Dr. Fry reading the works of various nature poets and a lively discussion on the topic. He told me that when he was a student teacher someone told him, “When you teach poetry, teach them to love poetry.” He does exactly that.

He wants people to be aware of nature. “When I'm aware, I feel part of something larger than I am,” he said while reflecting on watching the sun set behind the Catalina mountains.

I spoke to one participant, Claire, while I was there. She has been attending the program regularly for ten years. She said, “Bill has enriched my retirement years in a way I could never have imagined. In particular, he introduced

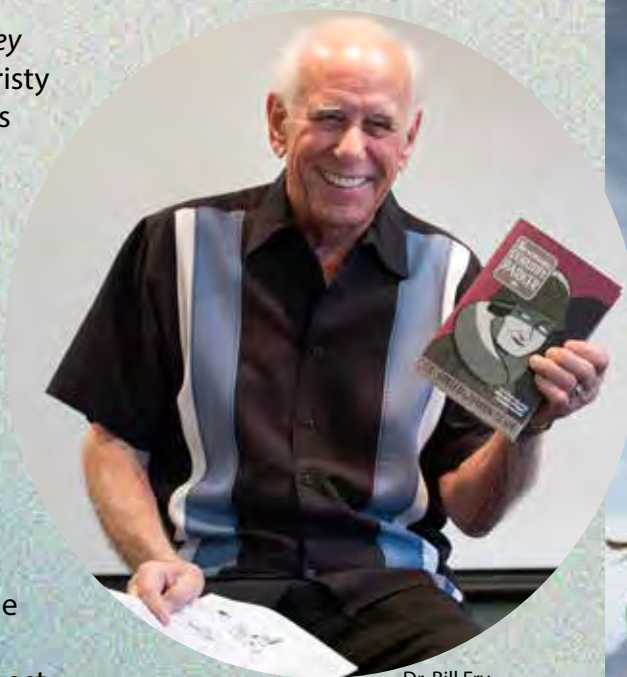
me to many women writers who wrote in the early 20th century and then gradually fell into obscurity. I particularly enjoyed his presentation on The Harlem Renaissance.”

In a 2008 article in the *Oro Valley Marana Magazine*, reporter Christy Krueger said, “Fry's popularity is due in part to his contagious enthusiasm.” After fifteen years, I can attest that it still holds true. His enthusiasm is as contagious as ever.

The program was established with the support of Jane Q. Peterson, who formerly managed Oro Valley Public Library. Jane said, “Dr. Fry makes the authors come alive for everyone in the room. Attendees soak in everything he says and, after most presentations, flock to the front to continue the conversation with him. He is a scholar who knows his material, a teacher who knows how to engage students, a gentleman who never undermines the comments of others, and a charmer who never forgets a name.”

Jumping back to the 2023 lecture I attended, Dr. Fry had everyone read Dickinson's “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass.” He stopped before the last four words to let participants guess what Dickinson was writing about. They said, “It's a snake.” He reads the end, “Zero at the bone.” They are correct. It sparks a discussion about local author Erec Toso's memoir *Zero at the Bone*. The conversation continues even as the clock winds down.

After more than two decades, the program still captivates audiences. I have no doubt that it will do just that for years to come.



Dr. Bill Fry

## We are customer focused

*Over the past 20 years, topics covered have included the legacy of William Shakespeare, the poetry of Dorothy Parker, and the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Louise Erdrich, Langston Hughes, N. Scott Momaday, Luci Tapahonso, and more.*



Dr. Fry with longtime GLOAT participants, Claire (left) and Anita (right)

**Visit our online calendar to find upcoming Great Literature of All Times sessions**

[library.pima.gov/GLOAT](http://library.pima.gov/GLOAT)

*Dr. Fry has never done the same lecture twice in 21 years!*

# Books on Wheels: A Love Letter

In March 2023, we received this letter about **Books on Wheels**. The customer wished to remain anonymous, but the sentiment remains.

Dear Monica, Kayleigh, Anton—our intrepid delivery person—and the rest of the lovely folks at Himmel Park Library,

For the last several years my mom has not been able to drive nor read even large print books due to progressive macular degeneration. In the last 2 years she has also been dealing with cancer, with all the attendant symptoms of both the cancer and the treatment side effects.

Through all these trials, her audiobooks from your Books on Wheels program have been a consistent comfort and bright spot in what has been a very challenging life! She delights in the escape of a well-crafted story, which allows her some distraction from a very difficult reality. She travels far from her quiet darkened world into bright adventures in new places. The books keep her company day and night. One of her most common requests is for help choosing a new book to read from the latest delivery.

She has also deeply enjoyed the personalized attention from Monica and Kayleigh, to thoughtfully selected books that bring her the most ease and pleasure. As she no longer drives and does not always have people around to run errands for her, she has also loved knowing that a friendly cyclist will be coming by to pick up the books that she has already enjoyed and to bring her a new batch.

Her life has been immeasurably enhanced by this program, and we thank you!

## About Books on Wheels:

Library volunteers select books for home delivery to customers who aren't able to visit the library in person, and Bike Ambassadors deliver the books once a month. If you or someone you know lives within five miles of one of the libraries below and would like books delivered, please contact the librarian:

**Himmel Park Library**  
Kayleigh H., (520) 594-5305

**Joel D. Valdez Main Library**  
Karen G., (520) 594-5500

**Murphy-Wilmot Library**  
Karen B., (520) 594-5420

**"I mentioned that I was looking for a job."**



Aluma,  
Job Help  
Customer

We love hearing success stories, including this one from Aluma, a Kirk-Bear Canyon Library customer:

I went to Kirk-Bear Canyon Library to use the internet and the quiet and studious space to search for and secure a job. I had been going there for a couple of weeks and had developed a friendly rapport with staff member Valerie.

On one Friday, after our usual friendly hellos, I mentioned that I was looking for a job. Not only did she take it upon herself to do an internet search and write down a list of potential places hiring in the field that I was looking for, but she also let me know that there was a free job fair every Friday. Plus, she helped me print my résumé for free—a service for job seekers. She went above and beyond to offer resources and encouragement, and I ended up landing the job, which was in large-scale event set-up.

Valerie—and my experience at Kirk-Bear Canyon library in general—was wonderful, and I'm grateful that such a safe-haven exists!

*"Connecting customers with the resources they need is a primary function of a librarian. It is always satisfying when we see quick results from our efforts. It makes our day!"*

—Valerie L.,  
Kirk-Bear Canyon Library

J O B



**Are you—or someone you know—looking for job help?**  
**Find a list of Job Help sessions on the Library's website!**  
[library.pima.gov/JobHelp](http://library.pima.gov/JobHelp)

We are customer focused

# From the bottom of my heart

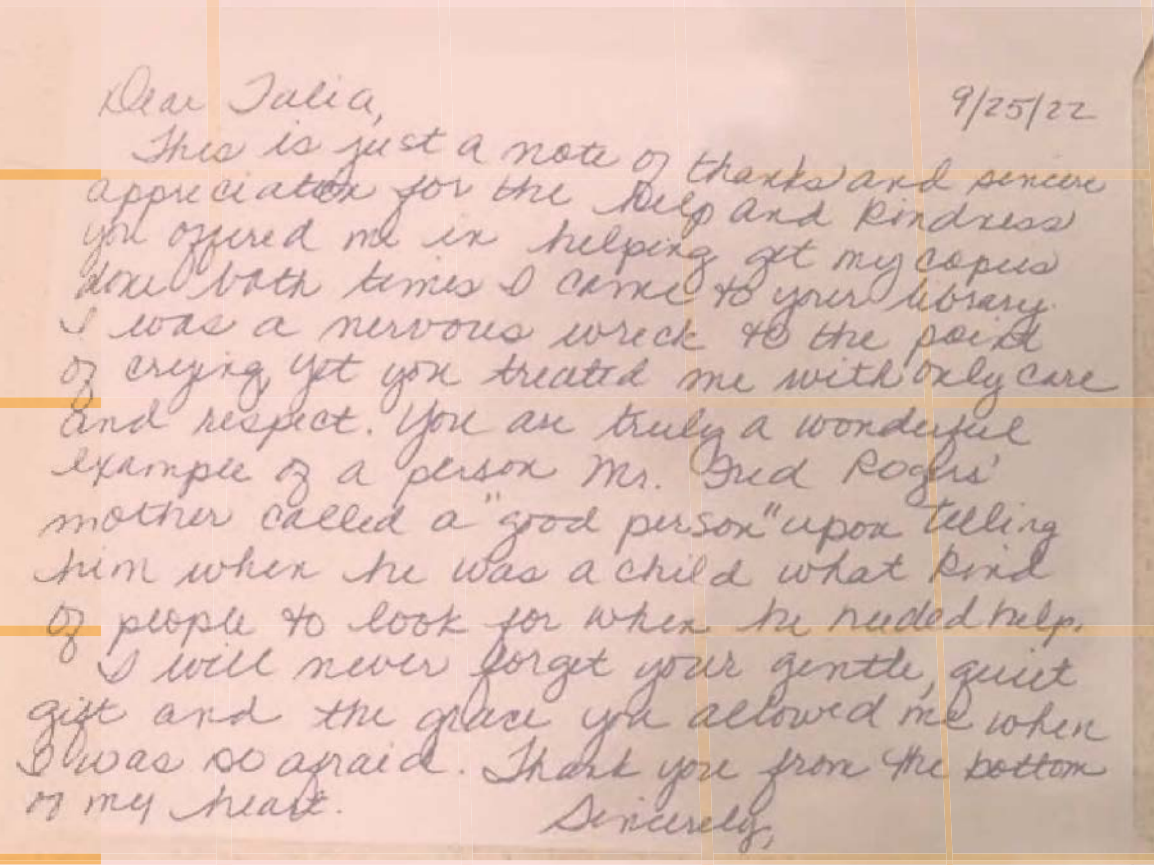
Talya A., Library Associate at Eckstrom-Columbus Library, received a letter from a customer praising her outstanding customer service. After receiving the note, Talya said, "I used a tool that the library system provides us to do our work. I'm grateful to be part of Pima County Public Library!"

Dear Talya,

This is just a note of thanks and sincere appreciation for the help and kindness you offered me in helping get my copies done both times I came to your library. I was a nervous wreck to the point of crying, yet you treated me with only care and respect. You are a truly wonderful example of a person Mr. Fred Rogers' mother called a "good person" upon telling him when he was a child what kind of people to look out for when he needed help. I will never forget your gentle, quiet gift and the grace you allowed me when I was so afraid. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



Talya A.



**Wireless printing is easy at your library!**  
**Learn more at**

[library.pima.gov/wirelessprinting](http://library.pima.gov/wirelessprinting)

**We are customer focused**



## PEOPLE

**1,072,298**  
POPULATION OF PIMA COUNTY

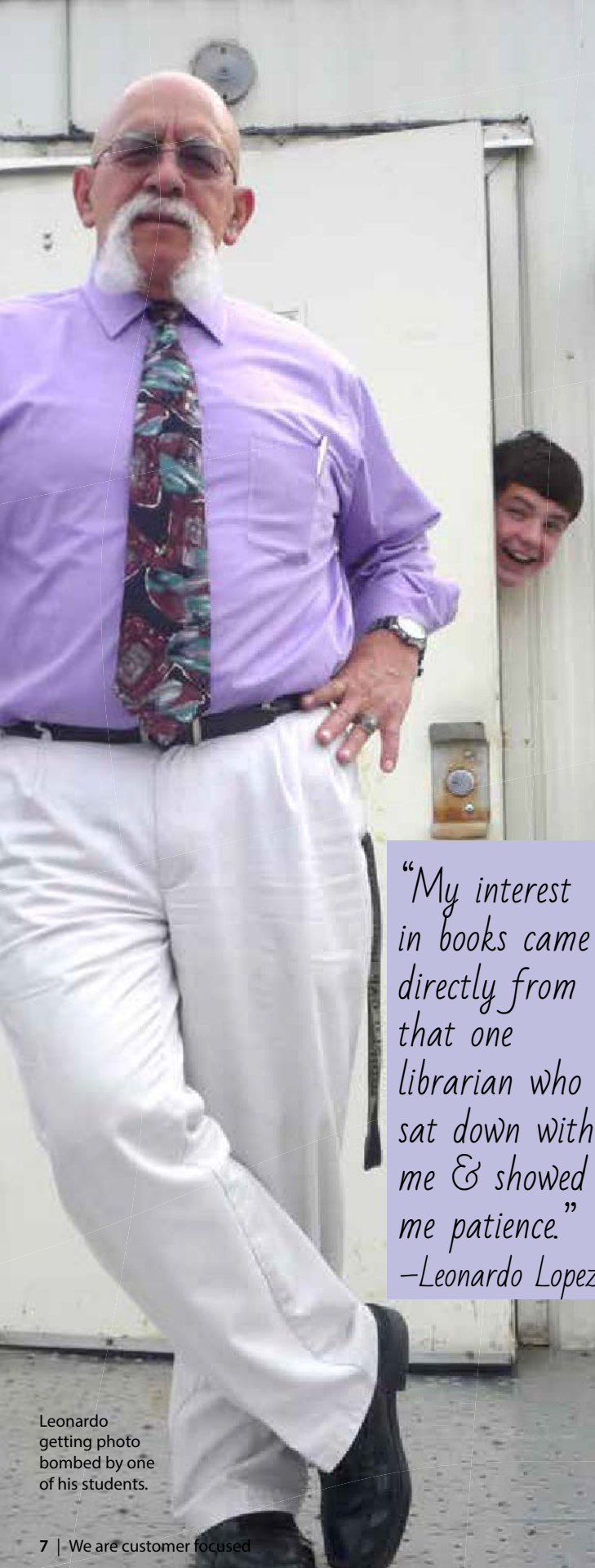
**300,649**  
LIBRARY CARDHOLDERS

**46,831**  
NUMBER OF NEW LIBRARY CARDS

**2,517,437**  
VISITORS AT THE BRANCHES

**341,744**  
COMPUTER USE SESSIONS

Young customer showing off her artwork at a recent Drawing Camp held at Joel D. Valdez Main Library.



# A thank you over fifty years in the making

**"I have no question."** For most people who write our Ask a Librarian service, they have a question. Not Leonardo López. In April 2023, staff received an email from Mr. López that began, "I have no question." Rather, we was writing to share with us how the library changed his life 53 years ago in 1971.

In the email, he said:

*I have no question. I was inspired by an NPR story about local libraries and their worth to their communities. From 1970 to 1971, I was in the Peace Corps in Venezuela. I returned to Tucson in late 1971 to join the local band The Dusty Chaps as the drummer.*

*After I had found a place to live, I walked to the nearest branch of the public library. On getting to the library, and applying for a library card, I had the good fortune to meet a librarian. She took it upon herself, after I had asked a few questions, to sit down with me and go over books that I might want to, or should, read. She compiled a list of about 100 books that, in her opinion, a well-rounded person should have read after high school. I'm proud to say that I did read 85-90 of the books on her list, including those by Herman Hesse, Aldous Huxley, J. D. Salinger as well as The Great Gatsby and Catch 22. She also introduced me to Greek and Roman philosophy and science fiction written by Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov.*

*VERY BELATEDLY, I want to say from the bottom of my heart ¡muchísimas gracias! / Thank you very much! I haven't stopped reading.*

I spoke to Leonardo on the phone briefly after he sent this

*"My interest in books came directly from that one librarian who sat down with me & showed me patience."  
-Leonardo Lopez*



At the Waynesboro Extravaganza event, where Leonardo played with Blue Soup, a band he was with for many years.

email and he shared a story that I want to share with you, dear readers.

In 1980, he received degrees in education and Spanish. He moved to Virginia where he taught and coached wrestling, football, track and field, and played in some amazing local bands.

At one point in his long teaching career, one of his students, Kristin, asked him if he had ever read the Twilight books. According to Leonardo, he responded with a resounding no. She replied, "Mr. Lopez, you always tell us to have an open mind about books. You tell us what to read and we read it. You're not practicing what you preach. Will you read Twilight?"

Kristin loaned him her copy of Twilight. There was an out-of-town football game that evening. He opened the book and read on the bus there, during game breaks, and on the ride home. He spent the weekend reading. On Monday morning, the student asked him, "Did you read the book?" Leonardo told her no. He waited a moment and then said, "I didn't read the book. I read all four books in the series. And I loved them."

The student beamed, and Leonardo said, "You have reminded me to never have a closed mind about books. Thank you for that."

We are customer focused

Leonardo getting photo bombed by one of his students.

# Revealing history

by Holly Schaffer, Community Relations Manager

I jumped at the opportunity to sit down with Troopers Jon Covington, Floyd Gray, and Lee O. Easter Jr. to discuss the Buffalo Soldiers special collection, which launched at **Quincie Douglas Library in February 2023 during Black History Month.**

Before we get to the collection though, it's important to address the Tucson Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Plaza that was unveiled at the Quincie Douglas Center in May 2021. The memorial focuses on the accomplishment of those Black soldiers known as the "Buffalo Soldiers." Features of the memorial are the memorial monument, the history panels, and unit flags.

A memorial monument made of North American pink granite to withstand our high temperatures shows the Arizona Territory locations where the soldiers served. It also recognizes and honors the Buffalo

Soldiers' service, sacrifice, and accomplishments while they were stationed in the Arizona Territory.

The six surrounding history panels, also designed to withstand the high summer temperatures, highlight a broader history of the Buffalo Soldiers including establishing of first Black units, their commanders, the nation's first Black officers, the military campaigns that involved the Buffalo Soldiers, national park service and those chaplains who served the soldiers.

Flagpoles were installed about a year after the memorial opened to display the regimental flags of the 9th and 10th Cavalries and the 24th and 25th Infantries.

It all sits beneath sail shades and alongside benches where visitors can learn and reflect.



Members of the GSAAC from left to right - Trooper Floyd Gray, Trooper Jon Covington, Trooper Phyllis Montgomery, Trooper Lee Easter, Jr., Trooper Vernon Williams, Chaplain Otis Brown, Trooper Joseph Bailey



The memorial was a collaboration between the City of Tucson Ward 5 Office, Tucson Parks and Recreation, and the Greater Southern Arizona Area Chapter (GSAAC) of the Buffalo Soldiers 9th and 10th (Horse) Cavalry Association, of which Troopers Covington, Gray, and Easter are members.

The memorial offers visitors a

visual representation of one of the most famed units in the history of American Armed Forces, but it also paved the way for the special collection at Quincie Douglas Library. Trooper Gray told me, "During a time when people are tearing each other down, our memorial and collection show positive contributions to the nation's social fabric and history."

Trooper Covington said, "The memorial gives people a bigger picture of how the Buffalo Soldiers fits into America's history." Trooper Gray continued, "It—and the collection—are icebreakers to the conversation about Buffalo Soldiers in Arizona."

The collection is impressive and includes more than books. Certified copies of paintings, newspaper clippings, military records, and sculptures sit atop and around the shelves holding such important books as *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, *Child of the Fighting Tenth*, *Voices of the Buffalo Soldier*, and many more. It also includes materials donated by local historian Dr. John Langellier, whose publications include *Fighting for Uncle Sam: Buffalo Soldiers in the Frontier Army*, *Southern Arizona Military*

*Outposts, & Scouting with the Buffalo Soldiers.* Donations also came from the collection of Morgan Maxwell Jr., whose father served as the principal of the Dunbar School—the only school for Black children in a segregated Tucson—beginning in 1940.

Trooper Covington remarked, "I enjoy seeing people come in and do research. It's the premier African American history spot and it's right here in Tucson. It adds to the history that is part of this country. You'd be surprised how many people ask, 'Who are the Buffalo Soldiers?'" Sammie Parker, who sat on the Tucson Buffalo Soldier Monument Committee in 2009, has visited the memorial, and hopes that the memorial starts to answer that question in a good way. He said, "[They are] the brave Americans who protected and served on the western frontier of our great nation for many years."

It's fitting that this unique Buffalo Soldier and African American collection is kept at Quincie Douglas Library. The library—and neighborhood center—are located at 36th Street and Kino Avenue in the South Park neighborhood, one of Tucson's five historic Black neighborhoods.

Trooper Easter said, "This collection is an ongoing growth of history and it's very fitting to have it at the library where it's accessible to all."



**Learn more about the GSAAC on their website**

[www.Az910Cav.org](http://www.Az910Cav.org)

We honor diversity

# Yours—and everyone's— freedom to read

According to *The Harvard Gazette*, “Getting books about LGBTQ issues into the hands of young readers is becoming more difficult with the recent rise of book bans across the nation. PEN America recorded more school bans during the fall 2022 semester than in the prior two. The American Library Association documented 1,269 attempts to ban or restrict books in libraries last year. This is the highest number since the group began tracking the issue two decades ago and nearly doubles the previous record set in 2021. Nearly half — 45.5 percent — of 2,571 unique titles challenged were written by or about LGBTQ people.”

At Pima County Public Library, we staunchly protect the right of each community member to select and access the materials they wish, for as the American Library Association’s Freedom to Read Statement says, “We believe rather what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society.”

**Here are some of the comments community members sent us to express their gratitude:**

“Having access to diverse materials is something that I love about Pima County Public Library and is something that I encourage more people to explore. I look forward to what the library will add to their book catalog in the future and just wanted to let you know that I really support the books and other items that are being brought into libraries. Thank you to anyone who helps the library continue to carry books and items that are diverse and slightly controversial and tackle difficult topics.”

“LGBTQ+ books are important because they tell stories about people who have been left out or ignored for a long time. These books give a voice to LGBTQ+ individuals and let them share their unique experiences with the world. They help us understand what it’s like to be LGBTQ+ and the challenges they face. That’s something we can all learn from.”

By having LGBTQ+ books in our library, we show that we accept and respect all kinds of people. It’s a way of saying, “You matter, and your story is important.” When LGBTQ+ youth see these books on the shelves, it can give them hope and make them feel less alone. It’s like a signal that they belong and that their feelings are valid.

I know some people worry that these books might be inappropriate or offensive, but that’s not what I see. LGBTQ+ books are about real people and their experiences. They’re about love, friendship, identity, and all the things we go through as teenagers. They help us see that we’re all human and that our differences make us stronger.

“It is extremely vital that we keep all books accessible for everyone who wants the chance to read. I hope that by keeping LGBTQ+ books it validates individuals who can relate to these stories and opens up new discussion for people who don’t belong to these marginalized groups. I hope that Pima County Library will continue to support authors of color and authors that create literary worlds that have LGBTQ+ stories at the forefront. I am in support of the collection of materials available for check out and hope that you continue to provide books that fit in this range in the future. Thank you, from a proud book reader.”

So, I really hope you’ll consider keeping LGBTQ+ books in our library. By doing so, we create a space where all people feel seen, respected, and understood. It’s a small step towards building a more accepting and inclusive community.”

**The library stands in support of the trans and wider LGBTQIA+ communities. We will continue to provide materials by and about trans and queer people of all ages. We will continue to welcome trans and queer community members into our branches. The library is free and open to all, and we serve everyone.**

**Read the full article in *The Harvard Gazette***

<https://bit.ly/HarvardGazetteArticle>

**We honor diversity**

*We love you, we support you, and we want you here.*



# Welcome to America presents Literacy Reads!



In January, the Library's Welcome to America Team launched Literacy Reads, a new collection specifically selected for beginning English readers. Features of these books include low page count, short chapters, and simple vocabulary in compelling fiction and nonfiction books.



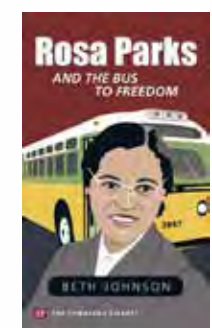
## Browse the Literacy Reads collection

[library.pima.gov/LiteracyReads](http://library.pima.gov/LiteracyReads)

Anyone wishing to improve their reading level in English will benefit from these books! From adaptations of classic literature and graphic novels to biographies of world figures and popular fiction, there's something for everyone in Literacy Reads. The books range from beginning to intermediate and advanced reading levels.

### Here are some books you can find in this new collection!

#### NONFICTION



Rosa Parks and the Bus to Freedom  
Beth Johnson

#### ROMANCE



The Italian Cure  
Melodie Campbell

#### ADVENTURE



The Sea Wolf  
Jack London

#### HORROR



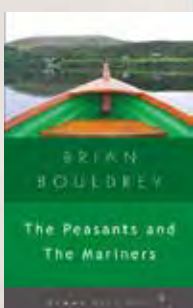
Blood Donor  
Karen Bass

#### MYSTERY

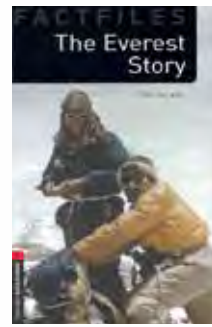


The B-Team  
Melodie Campbell

#### FANTASY



The Peasants and The Mariners  
Brian Bouldrey



The Everest Story  
Tim Vicary



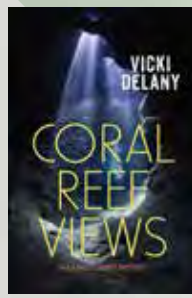
Worst Date Ever  
Melodie Campbell



Trapped  
Sigmund Brouwer



Frankenstein  
Burgen & Calero



Coral Reef Views  
Vicki Delany



The Wizard of Oz  
L. Frank Baum

# "These poems chose me, & I hope they communicate with you."

During National Poetry Month in April 2023, Many Nations team member Lindsey Curley (Diné) created a workbook that was incredibly popular among Library customers.



Lindsey Curley

Titled *10 Poetry Prompts Inspired by Native American Poets*, the publication features poems by members of Native communities throughout the United States alongside prompts asking you to reflect on the poem and write your own. It includes ten poetry types, including prose, kinship, shape, name, and reflective, among others. It also includes QR codes linking to relevant books at the library and outside sources.

## Due to popular demand, the workbook is back and available at your local library!

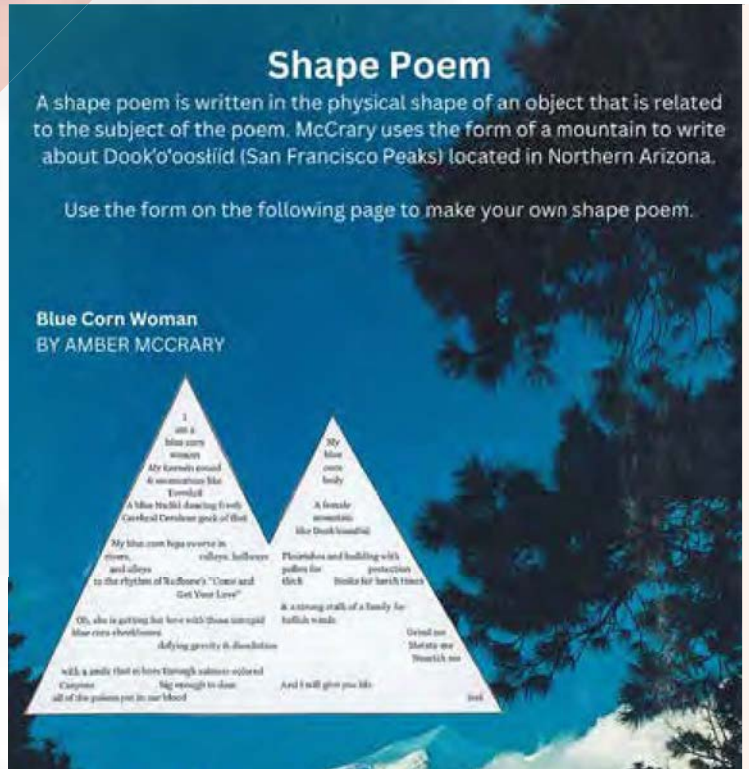
Included in the workbook are poems from Irene Nakia Hamilton (Diné), Joy Harjo (Mvskoke), Manny Loley (Diné), Amber McCrary (Diné), N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), Jake Skeets (Diné), Luci Tapahonso (Diné), Tanaya Winder (Duckwater Shoshone), and Ofelia Zepeda (Tohono O'odham).



Lindsey says:

*It is with great pleasure that I bring you a collection of 10 poetry prompts inspired by Native American poets. In a lot of ways, this workbook is a diminutive portfolio of the unique and rich cultures our vast landscape possesses—as there are many stories yet to tell.*

*As an enthusiast of poetry, I hope this workbook encourages you to explore other poets that our library has to offer. There are arrangements of sounds and rhythms... that are patiently waiting to connect with you. I hope you have fun creating your own world of poetry.*



## Learn more about the Welcome to America Team!

[library.pima.gov/welcometoamerica](http://library.pima.gov/welcometoamerica)

We honor diversity

# "You've been critically important to my small business."

Stephen Jarrett is the owner of Immersion Cycling. He sent kind words about Salazar-Ajo Library to the manager, Daniela Buchberger. Thank you for sharing your library experience, Stephen!



The very short story is that the Pima county libraries have been critically important for my small business and for my chance to bring bike tourists into the western county desert.

*Here's the longer story...*

I started a bicycle touring service in 2019 and began traveling across the United States to support it. The Ajo area and Pima county turned out to be a good candidate for winter gravel bike tours. But starting March 2020, everything shut down for Covid-19 and I found that Ajo's cell service wasn't working for my business needs.

**The Salazar-Ajo library came to my rescue.** The Library's Wifi connection was stronger than all of the cell service and other Wifi connections in town. We weren't allowed inside the Library at the time, but the Library's Wifi allowed me to work from my truck just outside the building. This was enough to help me keep my business going through difficult times.

**Libraries are the heart of their communities.** I see this in Ajo (where I can borrow books and DVDs, do research, and have questions answered), and I see this in all the libraries across North America. **I feel that libraries provide critically supportive services, and the Salazar-Ajo Library certainly counts as a major resource for me and for this isolated community.**

I want to thank Pima County for **investing in its people**, visitors like me.

¡Muchas gracias!

We are a resource for you

# Color Me Happy

by Holly Schaffer, Community Relations Manager



On the day I met her, 16-year-old Amariah told me that she's had dreams about her work hanging in an art museum. It came as no surprise, then, that she had a lot to say about creating art. "I hope to bring color and joy to others through my paintings and inspire them to do what they love," she told me, enthusiastically.

Amariah and I sat down to talk about her first art display, which hung at W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Library October 1 through October 21, 2022. The display, called Color Me Happy, featured a series of bright abstract acrylic paintings that matched her lively personality, which I noticed right away when I saw her teal blue, galaxy tie-dyed shoes.

At a previous visit to the library with her mom, Javare', Amariah saw artwork from one of the Vail School District's elementary schools on a bulletin board. "Would you like to share your work with the community?" Javare' asked. As one would guess, Amariah said yes.

In comes Librarian Kelsey Blackman, who helped bring Amariah's first art show to life. "We wanted the community to see her artwork," Kelsey tells me. "She is very kind and wants to bring color to the world. To be able to define something so personal in such a positive way is inspiring. She is also brave to want to share her art in such a public forum."

So, the art went up and Amariah was thrilled. "I was inspired... and it felt so powerful. When I first saw the little sign with my name on it, I texted all my friends!"

Amariah has always been interested in the arts. Her family has lived many places! She told me about going to the interactive Museum of Illusions in Miami and visiting many museums and theatres while living in the United Kingdom. She fondly recalled seeing the Wizard of Oz musical in London.

It was during the COVID-19 pandemic, though, when she really devoted herself to her own artwork. "Painting helped her get through the pandemic and the loss of a family friend," Javare' told me. Amariah added, "If you paint for 20 minutes, it helps with healing." With this in mind, she recently wrote an essay for school about the intersection of art and mourning.

Amariah's passion goes beyond acrylic painting. "I love all kinds of art, even things that aren't necessarily called art," she said. "Building LEGO Friends gives me inspiration. I don't use the instruction booklets; I use my imagination."



Amariah with pieces from her Color Me Happy exhibit.

A visual learner, Amariah also draws inspiration from graphic novels, movies, and animation. "Avatar 2 blew me away. Also, Avengers comic books, Ant-Man. Anything Stan Lee," she told me.

Amariah is an artist who has dreams. She loves horses and wants to own a ranch and give lessons for \$20 because she wants it to be affordable. She said she adores Netflix's Heartland (which the library circulates!) and might try painting horses someday.

With so many interests, it's no wonder that Amariah loves the library. "The atmosphere is so nice. The people are kind and generous and they have great programs. You can experience new things you never ever knew about."

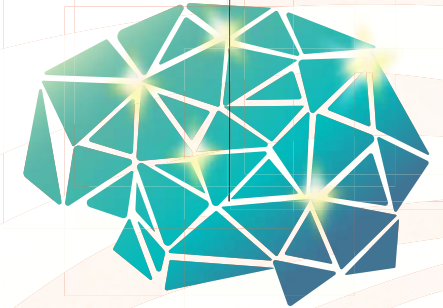
I asked Kelsey what effect she thought the display had on Amariah. "I hope that it encouraged her to continue to share her artwork," she replied, "as well as gain confidence in talking to people like library staff who can help make things happen. I also hope it gave her a strong and positive impression of the library and what libraries can do to support community members."

If you ask Amariah and Javare', I'm sure they'd say it did.



# Don't worry—make a Worry Monster

In December 2022, the Library's newest affinity team, Synapse, offered its first Grab N Go activity. The Holiday Survival Kit—one for children and one for adults—featured things to help people harness a sense of calm and relaxation during, what can be for many, a stressful time. Adults enjoyed calming chamomile tea, peppermints, Zentangle paper and pencil, and mindfulness cards, while children received bubble wrap, coloring sheets, playdough, and a Worry Monster craft.



**Synapse**  
PIMA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

*"I've been really impressed with the creative ways library staff reach out to your patrons. Thank you."*

## Praise for the Synapse Team!

"I just read about the new Synapse Team. This is an excellent idea in my opinion. I am a retired librarian and understand some library users have mental health issues (and staff too, no doubt). The more avenues there are for people to get the mental health help they need, the better, both for them and for the community. Establishing a team of staff members to address them concretely and non-judgmentally can only be a positive thing I believe. Kudos to all of you for a stellar idea!"

**The kit was a tremendous success! Nearly 1,000 kits were given away to children and more than 1,100 to adults.**

**Here is what some people had to say:**

*"Thank you so much for the Synapse kits. The bubble wrap was calming and it's nice to know people are getting on board with mental health stuff here. I'm putting the mindfulness card somewhere visible."*

*"I would like to stop and have a cup of tea. I want to read my book and drink my tea. That sounds nice!"*



**Perhaps the best feedback we received was about a boy named Grant and what the kit meant to him:**

*"I brought a few of the kits over to my friend and her two grandchildren. Her 6-year-old grandson enjoyed the Worry Monster craft and shared many worries that his nana hadn't realized that he had. She said that talking about his worries together really made an impact on him. He liked the activity so much that he ended up making "worry monsters" for family members and neighbors."*



Grant set up a station for people to make Worry Monsters.

**We are a resource for you**

**Learn more about Synapse on our website:**

[library.pima.gov/synapse](http://library.pima.gov/synapse)

# Exploring the world of book arts

Julia Jai Miller has taught numerous Creative Book Binding programs at multiple library locations. Curious about book binding and book arts in general, we asked Julia to answer some questions about her experience teaching these classes.

### What is your background and experience in the arts?

Well, that is a big question. I never thought of myself as an artist. It just wasn't a career option in my family, nor did I think I had the ability. But photography and crafts were something we always did and that I enjoyed. After my kids were out of elementary school, I realized I was missing creativity in my life. My husband suggested I go to art school, and I thought he was crazy! But I started at Pima and began to feel like I could do it. Then I enrolled at the UA as a photo major and absolutely loved it. Since then, I have created books of all different shapes and sizes. One of my photo books was even acquired by Specials Collections at the UA Library. That is a huge honor for me!

### Can you tell us a bit about the book binding classes you offer?

I wanted to teach book arts because the instructions can be difficult to follow from books. I studied books arts at the UA and at the American Academy of Bookbinding. These classes helped me understand the process of creating many different book structures and forms from start to finish. I felt that giving people the basics would help them explore the world of book arts on their own.

### How does book binding allow individuals to creatively express themselves?

Book arts can take you so many places! It really stretches the idea of what a book is and how art and books can be one and the same. Books as pieces of art can incorporate all types of visual art, from sculpture to photography, to paper craft and fiber arts. There is a point of entry for everyone in the book arts.

### What memorable experiences have you had teaching classes?

I've had many memorable experiences, they're often around the community that happens in the libraries. People helping one another and connecting with someone they didn't know before they walked in the room. Those moments are precious. The most memorable is probably the librarian who recreated the book we made in a class for her wedding vows. She used them in her ceremony. That was pretty special!



### Why do you like offering programs at libraries?

For me, it is a bit of giving back to my community. I love that I can offer programs that are free to the community, while being paid and respected as a professional.

### Why are libraries important to you?

Libraries are such a treasure to our communities, especially in Tucson. As a mom, I was dependent on libraries for access to free books and activities for my children. As an ESL teacher, I've been able to take my adult English language learners to the library to explore the all resources available to them. We are so lucky! Many of my students from other parts of the world have asked me if the library resources were actually free. They just couldn't believe it! As a GED instructor during the pandemic, my students were able to access meals for their children, and today, snacks. The library has become so much more than a quiet place for books. It has become a major resource for our community, and a place that embraces everyone!



Julia Jai Miller



We will amaze you with all we have to offer

# Stomp, giggle, stomp

by Holly Schaffer, Community Relations Manager

The doors to Kirk-Bear Canyon Library's Sensory Program open at 10:30 and parents, caregivers, and young children immediately begin streaming in. They marvel and awe at the room, which is beautifully arranged and features everything from sand, Play-Doh, and water tables to a cushioned balance beam, toys, and tiles that light up when stepped on. A xylophone echoes in the background.

As I observe the people coming in, I see adults putting down their bags and heading off to the activities, holding little hands eager to start playing. "Wow, look Mom," a young boy exclaims as he runs to the Play-Doh sandbox. A little girl, ponytail high atop her head, successfully completes the balance beam. She calls out, "I did it!!!". Nearby, two toddlers are taking turns on the light up tiles... one foot on, one foot off as the colors illuminate underneath their feet. They giggle, they stomp, they giggle... Stomp, red; Stomp, yellow; Stomp, green. Then more giggles.

The Sensory Program launched in early 2023 by longtime Children's Librarian Megan Hellwig with the support of Library Manager Linde Furman. It has been wonderfully successful, almost always filling to capacity. To meet the needs of customers wishing to attend, Library staff created two sessions every other week on Tuesday mornings.

The program is geared toward neurodiverse children ages five and under. To make sure the program was designed to benefit participants, Hellwig did a lot of training on working with autistic individuals and other neurodiverse people.

The children aren't the only ones enjoying the program. Adults walk around, following their little ones, holding hands, talking, mingling, taking photos. The room is spacious and calming – no phones ringing, lights are dimmed.

I spoke to Kimmy whose daughter, Valentina—age 2—loves the program. Kimmy tells me, "Valentina enjoys all the stations, but spends most of her time on the balance beam and water activities. Also, the staff is very welcoming. We speak Spanish at home and some of the staff caught on to that and began speaking to her in Spanish. It was so awesome—to speak to her in the language she recognizes the most. It can be small words, such as 'hello' and 'goodbye,' but it made us feel seen and included."

Library staff happily interact with all in attendance. They greet everyone as they come in, visit the various stations, sit down, ask questions, dip their hands in the sand. The room is safely set up for a truly pleasurable experience, and the little ones hop happily from station to station. They are playing, yes, but they're also learning how to interact, negotiate space, and share toys.

I chat with another mother, Katia, who says, "One of the nice things is that parents don't have to clean up. It might seem like a small thing, but as a parent, I know it's not."

As the session comes to an end, a young boy runs back and forth between the sand and water tables, while a little girl aces the balance beam on her third try. There is a large countdown



**The Sensory Program was made possible through donations made by Hughes to Friends of Kirk-Bear Canyon Public Library, a fundraising arm of the library that has received more than \$117,000 from the credit union since 2018 to help underwrite the costs of a variety of literacy programs and supplies.**

clock on the wall, so adults and children aren't startled when the program ends.

For neurodiverse children who can become overstimulated, staff created a calm down room where participants can go before heading out. The room features sunglasses for those who are light sensitive and headphones for those who are audio sensitive.

As the first program wraps up, new people begin lining up for the second program. The toys are cleaned up and everything is put back in order. As the doors open, people immediately begin streaming in. One thing is for certain, this program is a favorite.



Young children enjoying Kirk-Bear Canyon's Sensory Program

**We will amaze you with all we have to offer**

# "I've found my confidence."

On April 29, 2023 at Sahuarita Library, we celebrated a new class of Career Online High School graduates.

We celebrated 19 graduates from the past year. Not all could make the ceremony, but the room was full of proud families, a few dignitaries, and five graduates wearing caps and gowns and smiles.

Here is what some of the 2022 graduates had to say:

"Finishing school and earning my diploma has always been a lifelong goal. This program helped me gain self-confidence; I can succeed at any of my goals. I work at retail full time and want to enroll in college when I receive my diploma. I want to attend The University of Arizona to earn my Bachelor of Science in Nursing." – Angelina

"Obtaining my high school diploma was a requirement for future careers that interest me. I've found new confidence in the completion of this course to obtain my diploma. I currently work as a personal trainer. Of recent, I've considered pursuing a degree in Kinesiology." – Elijah

"It was important to receive my high school diploma to be able to go back to school and continue my education in nursing and show my children that mom could do it. Not having my diploma is something that has bothered me all of my life. I have been a Medical Assistant for 18 years and I'm at a point where I can't go up in pay anymore with a new title. Completing the program has shown me it is possible for me to [achieve] any goals I have. My goal is to become a NICU nurse. Thank you for the opportunity [to] move forward with my education." – Frances

"I wanted to get my high school diploma to say that I did it. To tell my daughter and future kids I graduated high school. I've gained confidence knowing I am a graduate." – Jazzmine

"I've gained confidence and realized that I can do much more than I ever thought. I made sure to stick with it because I knew that once I completed this course it was going to open doors for me. My mom hasn't been in the best health, and it makes me proud to tell her that I have completed my high school diploma. She was very happy for me. She knew how important it was to me!" – Marie

"The program gave me a second chance and I could not be more



The Career Online High School Program launched in 2016. Since that time, 125 individuals have completed the program.

grateful. I plan on continuing my education by enrolling in college in the future. I want to earn my degree in childcare and education." – Priscilla

Jon Meade, Career Support Librarian, wrote a blog post after the graduation ceremony. When a customer, Ash S., read it, they decided to sponsor a student next year. Here is what they had to say:

"I was moved to tears! I was so happy to see all of the smiling faces in the graduation photos, and so impressed that my local library is serving the community in such a big way. I am planning to sponsor a student this year so that the program can reach even more deserving students. Helping people find a second chance to earn their high school diplomas is changing so many lives for the better, and I am very proud to be a part of that."

Read the full blog post here: <https://bit.ly/COHSblog>

*Thank you to The Pima Library Foundation, Friends of the Pima County Public Library, Friends of the Oro Valley Public Library, and Friends of the Green Valley and Sahuarita Libraries for their generous support of Career Online High School.*

**Do you know someone who might be interested in the program? Do you want to sponsor a student?**

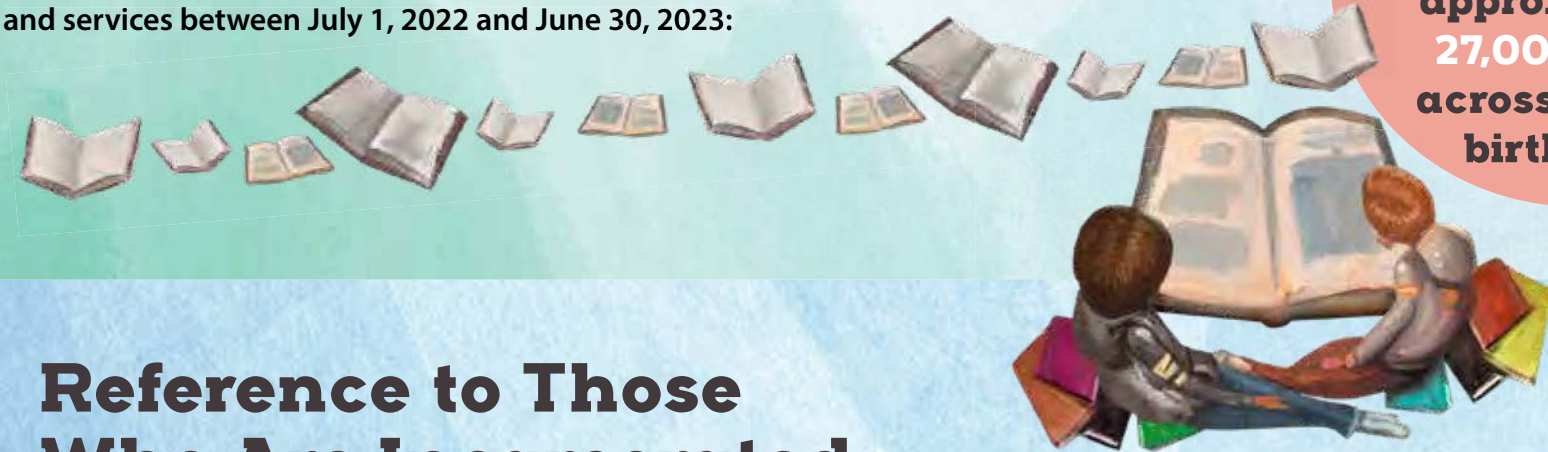
Find more information at [www.library.pima.gov/highschool](http://www.library.pima.gov/highschool)

We will amaze you with all we have to offer

Select graduates of the 2022 Career Online High School program.

# Cool things to know about Library Activities

Here are some cool things to know about Library activities and services between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023:



During Summer Learning, Library staff gave away approximately **27,000 books** across all ages birth to 18.

## We reached one million!

In 2022, thanks to our readers, we reached a record-breaking one million digital checkouts. Pima County Public Library was #51 of all public libraries, and one of 129 public library systems worldwide and second in Arizona to hit this milestone twice!

### Top 5 Audiobooks

- ♥ *Where the Crawdads Sing*
- ♥ *Pride and Prejudice*
- ♥ *Educated*
- ♥ *American Dirt*
- ♥ *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*

### Top 5 eBooks

- ♥ *The Girl in His Shadow*
- ♥ *The Judge's List*
- ♥ *The Four Winds*
- ♥ *The Last Thing He Told Me*
- ♥ *The Lincoln Highway*

## Reference to Those Who Are Incarcerated

This service offers information and support to our community members who are currently in prison. Our incarcerated citizens write to the library seeking information, entertainment, and community, just like any of our other patrons. **PCPL's Reference Department is poised to answer those needs through the letters program.**

People in prison have severe limitations on access to information. They cannot access the internet without strict content controls, they cannot access books or other materials without stringent guidelines, and while some prisons have "Resource Centers," these facilities are not libraries and their resources are limited. The Reference to Those Who Are Incarcerated service seeks to **uphold the Library Bill of Rights** and the American Library Association's Code of Ethics by alleviating the information gaps that our prison populations experience.

Last year, the Library's reference department answered **3,896** letters from people in prisons and jails across Arizona. We answered an average of **325** letters per month.

**Here is a letter of gratitude we received from a person who is incarcerated and uses the service:**

*Dear Pima staff,*

*April 16 is National Librarian Day.*

*I require no return on this letter. I am only using it as a vehicle to express my appreciation for the positive way your information services branch has affected me.*

*I am 32, incarcerated for 7 years. My friends (few as they were) abandoned me first, followed by my partner, and last my parents. I have nobody to assist with outside business. I am autistic with a mood disorder and the kindness your service offers me by way of access to information empowers me to change my life for the better. More importantly, it serves as a seed of hope that future interactions might go as well.*

*I hope you know just how much you have helped me learn about myself as well as plot a trajectory for my future. I could not have come this far without your assistance, and I promise that it will be repaid in kind. Maybe not directly to you, but to someone.*

*May you be happy. May you be perfect.*

*Most sincerely,*

## Addressing health concerns in our community

This past year, in partnership with the American Heart Association, we made blood pressure kits available at our libraries. Since then, more than 150 kits have been checked out!

**Of the partnership, Karyn Prechtel-Altman says:**

The Pima County Public Library's partnership with the American Heart Association to lend self-monitoring blood pressure kits is one of the many ways we are addressing health concerns in our community. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a silent and potentially dangerous condition that often doesn't present obvious symptoms until it reaches severe levels. Left uncontrolled, high blood pressure can lead to serious health problems, including heart disease, stroke, kidney damage and more. Being able to borrow blood pressure kits allows individuals to check their blood pressure regularly in the most convenient and accessible manner – in the comfort of their own homes. And it encourages individuals to take charge of their well-being.

In 2022, 34% of adults in Pima County purchased medications for high blood pressure. For individuals already diagnosed with high blood pressure, self-monitoring can help track the effectiveness of prescribed medications and lifestyle modifications. It allows healthcare providers to adjust treatment plans as needed. Monitoring blood pressure can also encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyle habits.

Libraries are all about empowering people and building strong communities. That's why we are so pleased to work with the American Heart Association on this project.

### You can check out a blood pressure monitoring kit!

[library.pima.gov/BPmonitors](http://library.pima.gov/BPmonitors)



Library staff & representatives from the American Heart Association test out the blood pressure kits

## Did you know?



# Spotlight on the Seed Library

Our Second Chance Seeds Program is one of the ways we continue to collaborate with community members. "Second Chance" refers to seeds that we have culled from our regular circulation, mostly due to age. These seeds still have life to give and we like to see them put to good use.



## Second Chance Seeds recipients:

- ♥ Galeria Mitotera
- ♥ Tucson Food Share
- ♥ Food Not Bombs
- ♥ The Historic Fourth Avenue Coalition
- ♥ ORO House
- ♥ Community Gardens of Tucson—Homer Davis Elementary School

**Between 5,000 and 10,000 seed packets were distributed through this program!**

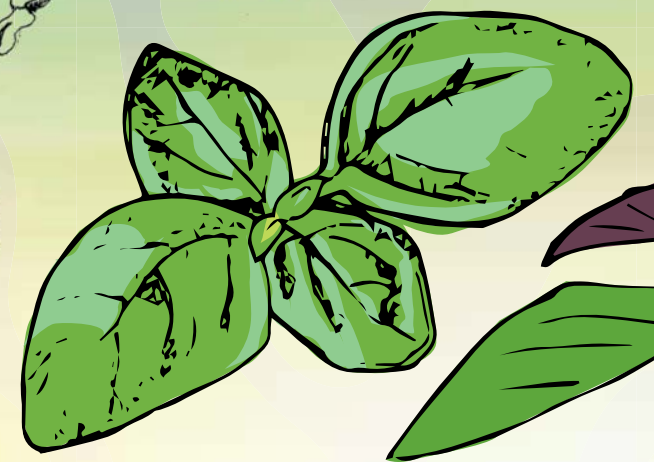
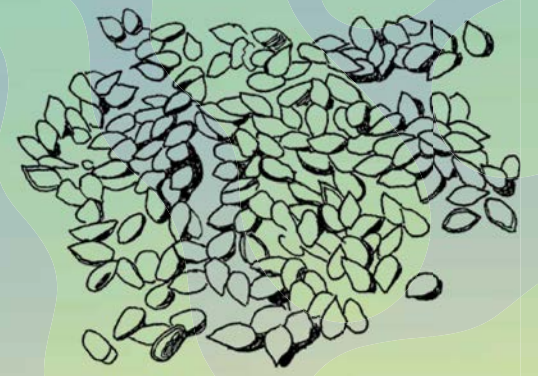
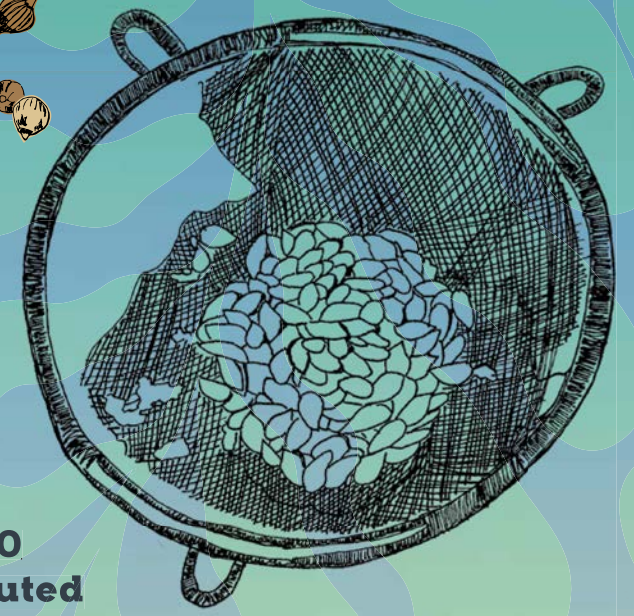
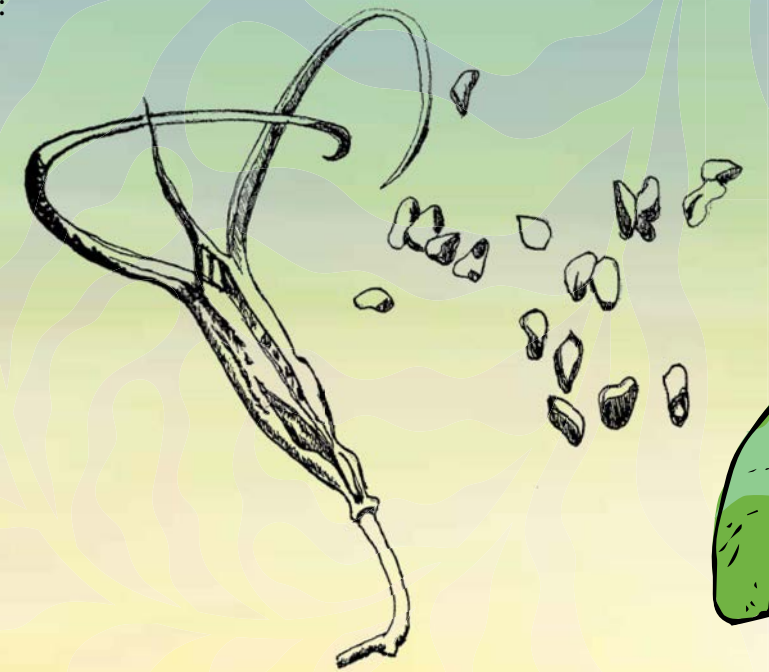
## Circulation continues to grow!

Last year, more than 66,000 seed packets were checked out. That's up from 55,635 the previous year.

## Popular in the community!

In total, 3,020 seed packets were given away at outreach events, including:

- Santa Cruz River Farmers' Market
- Pueblos de Maiz
- Rio Vista Family Night
- IRC Literacy Connect Fair
- Juvenile Detention Center
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- 29th Street Thrive event
- Sam Lena-South Tucson Library
- Bookbike outreach visits
- Garden Kitchen



# Drum roll.... Top Ten

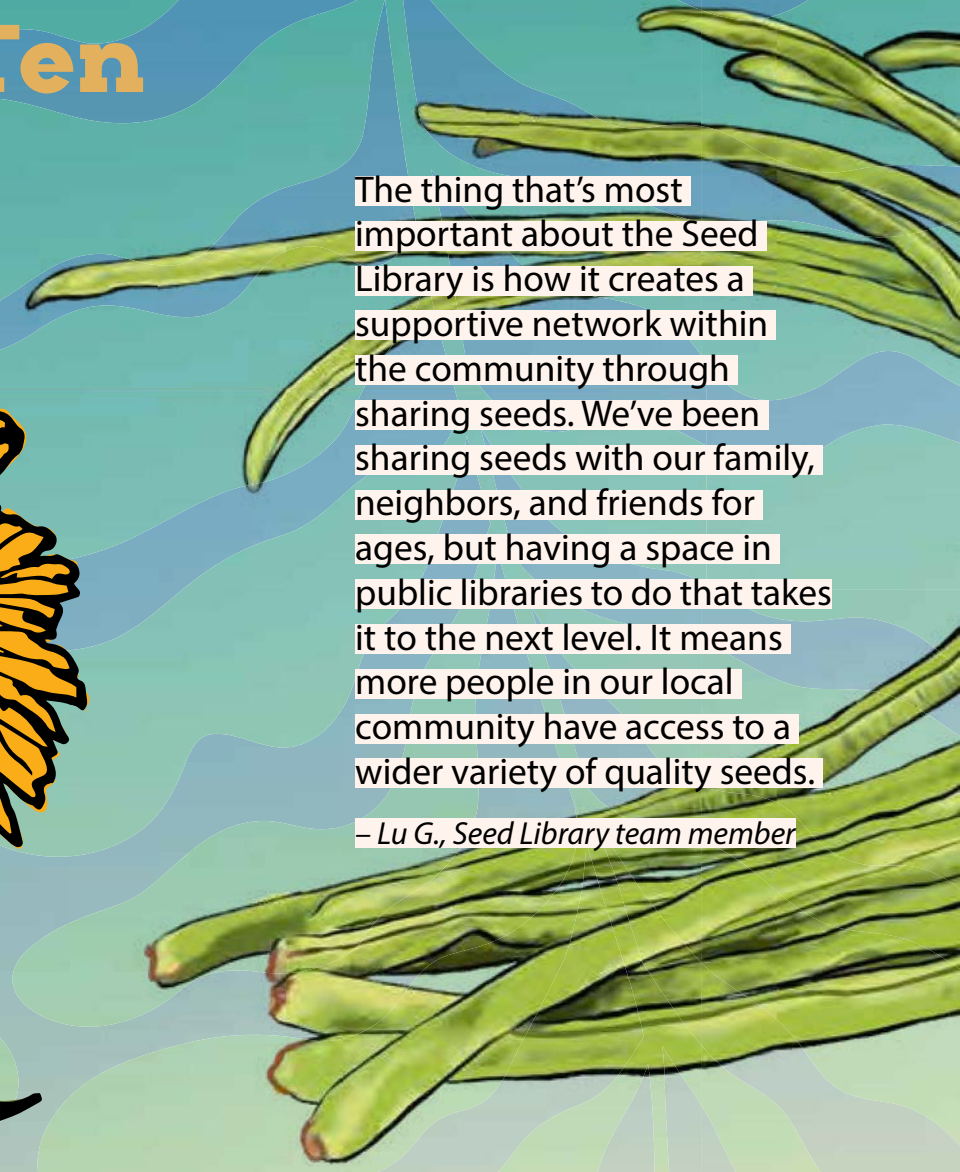
**Here are the Top Ten Seeds checked out last year:**

- Basil
- Common Beans
- Cucumbers
- Marigold
- Hot Peppers
- Sweet Peppers
- Radishes
- Sunflower
- Tomato
- Cherry Tomato



The thing that's most important about the Seed Library is how it creates a supportive network within the community through sharing seeds. We've been sharing seeds with our family, neighbors, and friends for ages, but having a space in public libraries to do that takes it to the next level. It means more people in our local community have access to a wider variety of quality seeds.

— Lu G., Seed Library team member



# Another year with amazing staff!

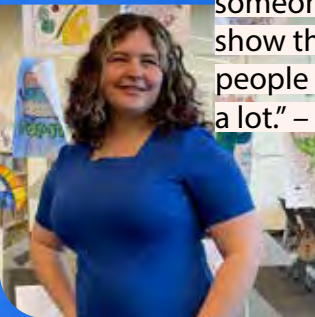
In 2014, we launched a monthly column in the Arizona Daily Star in which staff share their experiences working at the library, what drew them to the field, and why they love our community. Just about ten years later, it's still going strong!

Contributors come from all service levels, systemwide, and have highlighted the many things that make PCPL special and allowed readers a peek into the world of serving the public in a place open and accessible to all.



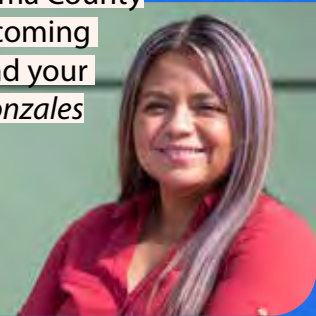
"Libraries are places where history resides, and, on those shared shelves, a profound understanding of our past can be made if you are willing to read through the pages." – Charlie Touseull

"The library is a place for anyone and everyone, with no questions asked. I'm trained to learn what someone needs, and show them that there are people who care, and care a lot." – Paige Carlson



"We need institutions like libraries to foster strong communities. We need strong communities prepared to participate and advocate for themselves in building towards their potential." – Jeff McWhorter

"Next time you are wondering where you can go or if there is any place that offers free entertainment, different workshops, and resources, consider your Pima County Library as a welcoming space for you and your family!" – Sila Gonzales



"And no matter what, we'll be there to reach, support, and celebrate each other and the community. Kindred Style." – Jessica Pryde



"Inclusion is a key element of our society, as well as in the Library system, and is what makes this country strong. Being a Chinese immigrant, I am aware how different cultures collide, but we embrace the difference and respect others." – Sharon Yang

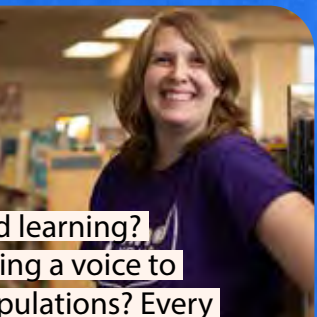


"I grew up on high fantasy; I loved living in the world of books, where magic and dragons and enchantments and curses were real, and the library is where I found that love." – Sin Daly



"I have repeatedly had young people come to me with what is weighing on them, a lot of it being about identity. The library is a safe space for learning and books are an ideal way to explore a world you may be drawn to but know nothing about. It is imperative that we keep these spaces sacred." – Em DeMeester-Lane

"I have worked at 9 of our 27 branches and, at each one, I found myself working with completely unique communities. I love learning how best to work with each of them while always maintaining the core library values of access to information that I hold so dear." – Kelly Wilson



"Passion centered learning? Safe spaces? Giving a voice to underserved populations? Every action taken by PCPL is grounded in community needs, and I wanted to be a part of that kind of organization." – Jana Bonfield



"We have had fake snowball fights, played endless Connect Four games, squished polymer sand between our fingers, and made indoor obstacle courses out of pool noodles." – Leila Duncan

## Staff, Stakeholder & Customer Corner

Want to read more from these articles?

[library.pima.gov/spotlight](http://library.pima.gov/spotlight)

# Twenty-five years of friendship

In November 2022, Caviglia-Arivaca celebrated its 25th anniversary. At a community-wide celebration, the Friends of the library, alongside the Library's Teen Advisory Board recognized the milestone making Papeles de Picado and stepping stones. There was also a dedication of their Children's Garden in memory of Byrd Baylor.

We checked in with a few of the Friends' board members about the library and their ongoing commitment to helping make it the best it can be.

*"For me, the library is my second home! I always receive a warm welcome from staff who are always helpful and inspiring. Through their programs I learn new crafts and knowledge, or just have fun! I especially like the variety of audiobooks and eBooks that are available, giving me access to information, as I have vision limitations. It's a wonderful place to be!"*

-Marji Leon

*The Caviglia-Arivaca Library is the heart of our tiny town; from books and movies to programs, it provides entertainment and learning. Thanks to the Pima County Library District for supporting us!*

-Eileen Jaffe

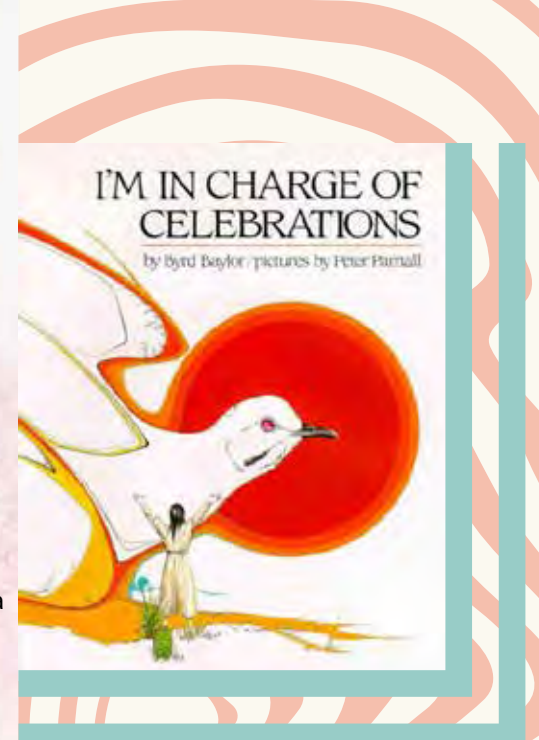
*We invite you to visualize a courtyard with native plants, bird feeders, the Byrd Baylor Children's Garden, and to take a seat on the large stone tortoise named Melesio or a Mesquite bench under the veranda, to ponder the precious treasures of our Arivaca Library. Step inside and the riches continue: welcoming smiles of our Jodi, Madian, Merilee, Naomi, Leesa, and volunteer Lee, who are professional, personable, knowledgeable, artistic, respectful, and kind, who love questions and answers. This richness has continued to evolve through our last 25 years and touches each one in our rural community and beyond, welcoming all. We invite you to come down and experience the colorful sparkling gems of our Caviglia-Arivaca Library, and feel renewed and uplifted - hopefully for the next 25 years! Our Library means all this and more to me.*

-Wendy Dresang

*One of the first things I did when I got settled in Arivaca in July of 2014 was go to Caviglia-Arivaca Library to get my new card. I got so much more! A friendly, welcoming conversation with the librarians, tips from patrons to get lots of books for the coming monsoon season, a start to knowing local history. What I've come to love about our library is that it is small but mighty, up to date with technology, innovative in programming for the whole community, in touch with people and caring about their well-being. It's not just about the books, but like books, the Library opens worlds to all of us.*

-Dana L. Topping

The celebration included a reading of Byrd Baylor's *I'm in Charge of Celebrations*



Friends of Caviglia-Arivaca Library board members. From left to right: Christi Trent, Eileen Jaffe, Dana Topping, Christina Neelson, Dotti Rees, Allyson Porter, Wendy Dresang. Not pictured: Julie Beal, Dena Kay, Marji Leon

Staff,  
Stakeholder  
& Customer  
Corner

# Meet Marissa, our new Deputy Director

Marissa Alcorta was appointed Deputy Director of Public Services and Customer Experience in September 2022. She is a founding member of the Nuestras Raíces Team, which she has been part of since she started working at the Library in November 2008.

In this article that ran in the *Arizona Daily Star*, Marissa shares her journey in librarianship and where it's taken her to today.

I've worked for Pima County Public Library for almost 15 years and that time has passed in the blink of an eye. This anniversary is weighty and special, and I can see how much I've invested in my career. It hasn't always been easy. Working within one's community is fulfilling but can also take a personal toll. The past three years have been difficult for me, many of our staff, and our community. We're all still trying to figure out how to do this work going forward. It's a constant work in progress.

I'm thankful for the opportunities I've been provided and to have found a career that is personally fulfilling and enjoyable. It's been a long road. In 2008, I returned to the desert southwest after two years in Indiana, working as an academic librarian. I missed home, the sun, the desert, the people, my community.

I've worked in various roles at Sam Lena-South Tucson, Martha Cooper, Richard Elías-Mission, Southwest, and Quincie Douglas libraries. In each role and different location, I've learned so much and have grown as a person and librarian.

I didn't do it alone. Being a BiPOC staff member in any organization can be difficult. I've been fortunate to have worked with colleagues that have invested in me and mentored me. These colleagues have gone through similar struggles and chose to give me their time, energy, and knowledge to help traverse a sometimes hard path.

The Library is blessed to have amazing staff who **truly care about serving their community**. Wonderful examples of this are our affinity teams. I'm proud to serve on the Nuestras Raíces Team, which I've done since I arrived. This team focuses on serving our Spanish-speaking and Latine communities and is integral to highlighting Latine authors at our Tucson Festival of Books tent. In addition, we highlight and promote the Library's Spanish language collection. This team is vital to the important work we do in historically ignored and marginalized communities.

Nuestras Raíces has been a home to me. This welcoming and culturally inclusive space helped me grow, dream, and reach for more. I've been mentored and mentored others. I wouldn't be where I am in my career without the support from this wonderful team.



Marissa Alcorta

My new position as Deputy Director of Public Services and Customer Experience has been a major shift with a lot of growth and learning. This leadership role puts me in a privileged and unique position to make major decisions that will affect staff and our community. I am also one of the **first BiPOC women in this leadership role**. It sometimes feels like a heavy weight to carry, but I continue to be supported by colleagues who remind me I'm not doing this work alone.

I do not take this new role lightly. I want to further create inclusive systems of support for our staff that do so much for customers and community members. If they are not given what they need to thrive, they cannot continue providing resources and services that people enjoy, need, and deserve. I'm excited for the possibilities the future holds for all of us. I am still some years out from retiring, but I hope when I do, I can look back and say I made a positive impact.

One last thing! If you haven't been to one of our libraries recently, please come on by. Our staff will warmly welcome you and ask how they can help. We have books, music, magazines, computers, incredible programs, and comfy chairs to sit in. We will help you find any resources you may need.

We have a place for you at our libraries. Please visit when you can, and bring your family and friends when you do. You are welcome! ¡Todos son bienvenidos!

# You're so kind to say so!

Are you curious to know what people think of Pima County Public Library? Here are just some of the comments we've received from our customers this year.

The libraries are welcoming and safe, staff members are helpful, and the online system is easy to use. I think it's a terrific library system and I am happy to support it with my tax dollars. I brag about our excellent library system to out of town friends and family.

What a wonderful privilege it is to be able to experience all that your library has to offer!

Pima County Library is a wonderful resource! I chose my townhouse based on close proximity to my library.

Pima County Library is an outstanding example of service to local individuals and families. Thank you library workers!

You have amazing resources, including diverse summer programming for youth. I brought my three nieces—ages 8, 3, and 3—and all the programming, take home art kits, integration with books and culture, as well as the incredibly kind, knowledgeable, and warm librarians was amazing.

It's the best place to find answers.

I can always count on the Library if I need something.

Library employees are consistently kind and knowledgeable.

This is the finest library I have ever been to.

I love coming to the Library. All of your branches are lovely and welcoming.

The Library is a very important resource for our community, and one that is so undervalued in culture today. Let's get the word out: Enjoy the offerings of Pima County Public Library!

Everyone that works at the library is very friendly and so helpful that I love going. I am new to the area and the library has been a very welcoming place. I am very grateful that they are so close to home.

I think our library is the most people-friendly service ever provided to Tucsonans by local government.

The staff is fabulous. The service is the best. I have lived in a number of other cities, but Pima County Public Library ranks at the top of my experiences.

Public libraries are vital, especially in this age of misinformation. I always have great experiences with Pima County Public libraries.

As a polyliterate I love the selection of books in other languages. Pima County Public Library has such a great collection.

What can be better than books and helpful people?!

I was thinking how empty and dull life would be without Joel D. Valdez Main Library and other branches all over Tucson, where you can find something to read, listen to, watch, or plant!

You have EVERYTHING. Truly has something for everyone!

The Library is a fantastic place. The free access to books, other materials and the encouragement of self-expression is harbored and nurtured within its walls. Pima County Public Library has helpful staff and a wide array of resources available to patrons. I find something new each time.

The Library is a wonderful space to be surrounded by the gifts of knowledge from all cultures and creative individuals.

It's always a privilege to have accessible public space for people looking to expand their knowledge.

The best places to hang out are your libraries.

I love reading. You have books. I read for free. What could be better?

Staff

Corner

# Volunteer Spotlight: Valerie Robinson

Valerie began facilitating Mindfulness Meditation and More classes at Joyner-Green Valley Library at the end of 2022. She leads the class on the first Tuesday of every month.

We asked Valerie if she could tell us more about her experience volunteering in this role:

I am a participant and one of the volunteer facilitators for the Mindfulness Meditation and More class held on Tuesdays at 4 pm at Joyner-Green Valley Library. Because of the naturally peaceful and calm atmosphere the library provides, it has become my favorite place to practice group meditation. Mindfulness meditation emphasizes non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. The focus and benefits of the practice are developing equanimity and the ability to relate to situations, oneself, and others with kindness, acceptance, and compassion. As a result of practicing mindfulness meditation, I have less fears about the future, fewer regrets or emotional suffering from the past, and I am more in tune with the here and now in a more loving way. Mindfulness Meditation has changed how I view myself and my fellow man. It has helped me to cultivate a more grateful attitude in my daily living. How fortunate it is our library provides a quiet, safe haven where, as a community, we can learn and practice this manner of mindful living.

Our library provides many other free services to our community. It keeps us informed of upcoming events and classes, gives us access to computers and printers, books, CDs, and more. The library encourages learning for all ages without any discrimination or bias. There is always help available from the staff and community volunteers. Our library is a wonderful place that affords us all the opportunity to learn and grow.

**Last year, 975 volunteers shared 5855 hours at library locations!**



**Library Associate Deborah Bosma is the Volunteer Coordinator at Joyner-Green Valley Library. She says,**

*“Valerie is amazing! I love that she writes her own heartfelt and touching meditations.”*

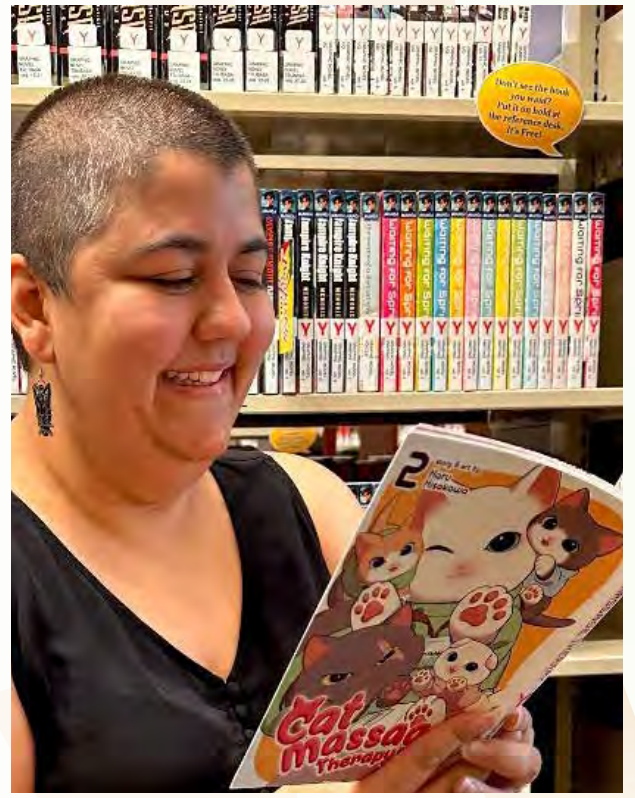


Valerie Robinson leads a Mindfulness Meditation class.

# Library cards are awesome!

Lauren Bernard from East Regional Library in Louisiana contacted us in May requesting a Pima County Public Library card that was to be used in her library's United States Map Project. It was displayed during Summer Reading to align with the theme 'All Together Now.'

She said, "I began this project about a year ago when I realized that the Summer Reading theme for 2023 was "All Together Now". I wanted to be able to put up a visual display for all our children to see that there are libraries just like ours across the country! It felt like the display would emphasize the concept of unity even more. Children sometimes have a hard time imagining anything outside of their own personal bubbles. I wanted to give them a glimpse into how big and wide our world can be while also showing them that while we may be in different states, we all have something in common."



Ally Cisneros

Speaking of library cards, we met Alysha "Ally" Cisneros from Ontario, California. She is the Teen Librarian for the Ovitt Family Community Library and the Volunteer Coordinator of the entire Ontario City Library system.

She also collects library cards and, while visiting Tucson in March, stopped by Joel D. Valdez Main Library to pick one up. She agreed to answer some questions about her collection and love of libraries.

*We're grateful to Lauren and Ally for keeping Pima County Public Library in mind!*



### How many library cards do you have?

Counting just the large regular cards (not the separated smaller key chain cards) I have over 131 cards.

### For how long have you been collecting them?

I have been collecting them officially since I won a silent auction at the California Library Association (CLA) conference in 2015. For close to \$100 I won a wonderful collection of over 106 cards from libraries across the state that were donated by library directors to raise money for the CLA organization.

### What inspired you to collect them?

I loved my new collection from the conference and added a few other cards from various libraries I had visited throughout my life. I quickly realized I wanted to keep the collection growing. I love visiting libraries when I travel and getting a library card is my souvenir from that city. Truly it's the best souvenir I get myself on any trip I take. They are very special to me.

### Do you travel to libraries to get them, or is a lot of the contact done via email or mail?

I travel to the libraries. I feel it's more special that way. When they are in my collection it's almost like being able to show people my travels. I hope when I am old and grey to have a box bursting with library cards from around the country and even the world.

### Is it possible to estimate how many libraries you've visited in person?

Oh boy... That's a hard one. I would say I have been to at least 30 different libraries across the country, very likely more, but I've been visiting libraries for a very long time, so I don't remember all of them.

### In your opinion, why are library cards and, by extension, libraries important?

Library cards are often a representation of the culture of the city they belong to. Many have gorgeous art created by local residents or photos of iconic images from that city. When people see a unique library card I feel like they realize how unique and special libraries truly are in their community. I think libraries in general are so very important as they are a means to bridge the gap for people and make sure the community has the resources to improve their lives either through education, entertainment, or interaction with other community members. There is nowhere else in the world that offers you all the things that libraries do, especially for free!

### What PCPL library card did you select?

I had the hardest time just choosing one. Truly I wanted them all. I ended up choosing the "Be Kind" desert hare card. I have a childhood nickname of Bunny and I thought it was a great choice. It was my actual birthday when I visited your amazing library and received my most precious birthday present. Thank you for helping grow my collection!



# Twelve months of Rainbow Reads and Read Black

Rainbow Reads, a positively queer reading circle, is hosted by the Library's Pride Team. It offers readers an opportunity to discover and discuss books that highlight LGBTQ+ people and experiences.

These are monthly programs, so it should come as no surprise that a lot of books are enjoyed, discussed, and celebrated throughout the year. Here are just some of those books:

## Attend Rainbow Reads!

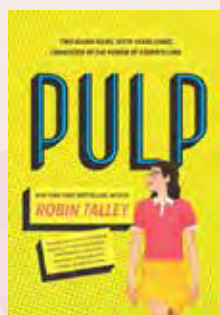
<https://bit.ly/PCPLRainbowReads>

# RAINBOW READS



Body Grammar  
Jules Ohman

"Ohman deftly crafts a heart-aching, healing, and clarifying journey of self-acceptance, trauma recovery, and queer love in this debut coming-of-age novel."  
– BuzzFeed



Pulp  
Robin Talley

"Quite moving... Pulp offers a pointed reminder that history is never that far behind us."  
– BookPage



Future Feeling  
Joss Lake

"This fantastic debut centers trans characters and friendships in ways that will have you laughing, reflecting and relating."  
– Ms. Magazine



My Government Means to Kill Me  
Rasheed Newson

"Newson's writing is crisp and clear, witty and engrossing the kind of prose that pulls you in so quickly you'll miss your subway stop."  
– Lit Hub



A Marvelous Light  
Marske Freya

"Truly a scrumptious treat of a book, like a fancy tea all laid out with silver spoons and floral-painted cups."  
– NPR



Even Though I Knew the End  
C. L. Polk

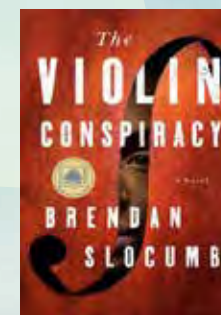
"Eerie, sharp and fiercely bittersweet."  
– The New York Times

# READ BLACK

Read Black, hosted by the Library's Kindred Team, allows readers to have discussions that further the conversation on Black literature, history, and culture.

## Attend Read Black!

<https://bit.ly/ReadBlack>



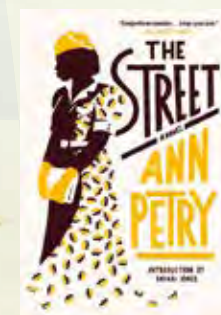
The Violin Conspiracy  
Brendan Slocumb

"A spellbinding first novel that melds classical music, the mystery surrounding a stolen violin and history, too—by way of some troubling insights into our nation's painful legacy of slavery."  
– Ebony



Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619–2019  
Ibram X. Kendi & Keisha N. Blain

"This seamless collection crackles with rage, beauty, bitter humor, and the indomitable will to survive."  
– Booklist (starred review)



The Street  
Ann Petry

"To this day, few works of fiction have so clearly illuminated the devastating impact of racial injustice."  
– Coretta Scott King



Black Women Will Save the World  
April Ryan

"An impassioned celebration of Black women and their roles in transforming the nation."  
– Kirkus Reviews



Content Warning: Everything  
Akwaeke Emezi

"Leading with the spirit, these poems celebrate the parts of ourselves that we cannot kill or reduce. Surrender, abuse, survival, and homesickness are all themes in play in these poems that really do need every content warning imaginable."  
– Book Riot



D'Vaughn and Kris Plan a Wedding  
Chencia C. Higgins

"A beautiful distillation of the ways love can come if you simply open your heart, your arms, and fall, trusting the other person to hold on while they fall alongside you."  
– Entertainment Weekly

*Rainbow Reads and Read Black are such a delight to lead nearly every month. There's something about bringing together three of my most important identities—Blackness, queerness, and bookishness—and sharing the joys of being all three with members of my community, whether they share those identities or are looking to expand their own horizons. Our conversations are fun, thought provoking, and honest, and I love to share the books I've been reading with likeminded readers.*

– Jessica P. Pryde, Librarian, member of Pride and Kindred Teams

## Find more recommendations from the Pride Team!

<https://bit.ly/PrideRecs>

## Find more recommendations from the Kindred Team!

[library.pima.gov/KindredRecs](https://library.pima.gov/KindredRecs)



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*For readers, learners,  
doers, & dreamers*

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