

Annual Report

2024-2025

PIMA COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY 



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

Vision

Mission

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

Values

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

The Seed Sower

The trek from Elgin, where she lives, to Sahuarita Library takes Julie Jimenez about an hour, but as she says, "It's well worth the drive just to see the library. It's a state-of-the-art building, welcoming in design, the staff, the variety of materials."

Upon her first visit when the library opened at its new location in 2021, it was the Seed Library display that caught her attention. Having lived in Minnesota, New York, Florida, Texas and most recently, Queen Creek, AZ, she has dabbled in gardening in a variety of zones but hadn't yet tried it in Elgin. "When you relocate," she remarks, "you start over with a new learning curve."

Julie says, "I call myself a stumbling beginner, a seed sower. If I tell people that I'm a gardener, it makes it sound like I know what I'm doing. I just plant all the seeds in the packet and give them a shot to grow."

Since that first visit to Sahuarita Library, gardening has become central in Julie's life. In addition to nine horses, numerous chickens, compost, and curious and pesky desert critters, her ranch is chock full of pots, a circle garden and pony walls, and a greenhouse.

"Gardening has become a family affair," she says. Her son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters, ages 3 and 5, live on the property. She tells me, "The girls came from rural Minnesota to a ranch. I bought them their own little rakes and shovels."



Julie Jimenez

Photos courtesy of Julie Jimenez



Sophia N



Squash, pumpkins, and watermelons have large seeds... they're great for little hands."

Side note... Julie received the Blue Ribbon for her squash and pumpkins at the Santa Cruz County Fair!

"The kids look at the seeds every day. 'Grandma, look! It got bigger!'" Julie recalls watching their brains start sparking. "Sure," she says, "they've seen tomatoes at the store, but here, they get to watch them grow in real time, outside."

Laughing, Julie says, "BORED! We don't say the B-word at Grandma's house. There's not enough time in the day to do all the things we love, especially in the garden."

In total, Julie has five grown children and ten grandchildren ranging in age from 3 to 30 years old. "Other than the three- and five-year-old, my grandkids live in urban areas," she says. "How cool that I get to share this knowledge and love of growing with them when they visit."

The fun doesn't stop outside, though. It carries all the way through to the meals they cook and enjoy. Julie says, "My daughter in law is German and an adventurous cook. I'm Puerto Rican. My husband is Italian. We look up recipes together and integrate stuff from the garden. She is a wonderful cook. One woman growing, one woman cooking. We are very independent, very strong." One of her daughters, a fantastic cook, also appreciates the garden goodies.

Her seed sowing extends beyond the kitchen to her beloved community. She sows and shares so many seed transplants that her neighbors often bring back plants grown from her seeds. "Isn't that nice? I get to pair something I love doing and share it with others," she observes.

Be it broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, tomatoes, beets, carrots, spinach, or kale, everything is given away or used and enjoyed. She smiles as she tells me, "If you have 5,000 tomatoes, make a spaghetti sauce. If you have 27 pumpkins, puree them. Nothing should go to waste."

Julie spent ten years as an equine therapist and thirty years as a children's therapist and compares her career to her gardening. She tells me, "I sowed seeds of hope with people as a therapist. Now, thanks to the library, I'm sowing seeds in a garden."

2 years later, here we are!



Mikey Lowery

Upon their first visit to Eckstrom-Columbus Library, twin brothers Max and Mikey, age 14, were asked by their Grandma Bonnie how it went. Unsurprisingly they told her it was great. Well, it's been two years since then and in their words, "Here we are!"

And in those two years, the brothers became deeply involved with the library. They attend summer programs, play Dungeons & Dragons, and participate in other activities, including Jenga.

"Max," said Mikey, "built the tallest tower at the library. It was ten feet! He needed a step ladder to reach the top."

They also play chess, something they were relatively new to before starting at the library. By now, they're not only part of Chess Club, but they're also mentoring others.

"Chess helps us connect with people," they told me.

Max takes chess pretty seriously. Once, when he lost to Mikey, he didn't speak to him for the rest of the evening. "I woke up better, though," he said.

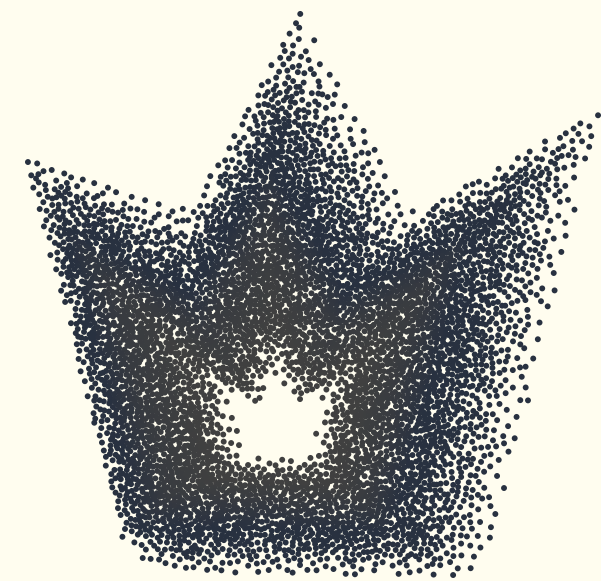
Beyond chess, Jenga, video games, and more, Max volunteers to help with art and crafts on Saturdays. He said, "I love meeting and helping the little ones in the library. I like to make sure they know what's happening and feel comfortable." He also stocks books, decorates boxes at the self-checkout area, and really, "Anything else that needs to be done," he told me.

On Fridays, Mikey helps make sure Read to a Dog with Logan—a poodle, golden retriever mix—runs smoothly.



Max & Mikey Lowery

Chess Club isn't the only program offered to youth, we also offer in-person and online Homework Help. Last year, **1,186** youth used the service!



Outside the library, Mikey's time is spent in Boy Scouts and swimming. Max plays the piano and had a recital at the library.

"I asked the librarian if I could have a recital in one of the meeting rooms," he said. He was granted permission and within weeks, friends and family gathered to listen to him play holiday favorites, including "Jingle Bells," "Frosty the Snowman," and the Charlie Brown theme.

The boys had a lot to tell me about the things they like. Max mentioned quite a few books, including *The Wild Robot*, *Trials of Apollo*, and the *Wings of Fire* series. He also brought up Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series. "He goes on cool adventures I could picture myself doing. Plus, he's 14 so I can relate."

Mikey, who read *The Poison Jungle* (*Wings of Fire* #13) in just five days and enjoys Norse mythology and short stories, has a strong opinion about books being turned into movies. He said, "If you're going to make one, the author has to be consulted if they're around to be consulted."

They both love animation. When I asked why, Max remarked, "There's so much you can do with it. There's no limits of the human body. It's as creative as you can imagine and draw."

We spoke quite a bit. Mikey spent a considerable amount of time educating me about War Hammer, including the Space Marines—genetically engineered super soldiers from the 40,000 universe. "They have two hearts! Three lungs! They're nine feet tall!"

Speaking of War Hammer, Mikey plans to spend the money from his first job on miniature War Hammer figurines. "I'll also need paint and glue," he said. "It's a very precise art."

We continued chatting about video games, music, and school subjects, but it eventually returned to the library. I asked them why they keep coming back. Without hesitation, they told me, "It's got a little bit of everything. It's a good place when you're not at home. It's got computer games, activities, free WiFi, and books."

I agree wholeheartedly! And Max and Mikey, you're welcome anytime!

“I had 12 months to learn how to knit”

This note of appreciation came from Sandra Millward, a customer at Kirk-Bear Canyon Library:

Hi! My journey back to knitting at age 73... never too young!

As a young girl raised in a family of five girls and two boys, I never enjoyed knitting. My mother, who was raised in England, was an amazing knitter. She would try to teach all her daughters how to knit. I often escaped knitting lessons and volunteered to do any other chores or cooking activities in the house.

One of our family's favorite and treasured knit items is our Santa Christmas stocking.

Mom knit each of us our own stocking with our names on them. As we became adults, got married, and had children, Mom knit a stocking for each of her sons- and daughters-in-law, as well as for each of her grandchildren.

Mom passed in 2015. After her passing, both my daughter and daughter-in-law each had one more child. My daughter was fortunate—her mother-in-law knit a family stocking for her new little one. I asked her mother-in-law if she might be willing to knit one more Santa Christmas stocking. Her response was, “Sorry,” and then she added with a smile, “After finishing that one, I promised myself— ‘One and done!’”

That Christmas, we took my stocking, covered my name with tape, and wrote my granddaughter's name on it. When she heard the response, “No, one and done,” our little sweetie looked very sad. I reached over, gave her a hug, and said, “Grandma will knit you one for next year!” A smile returned to her sweet little face.

I had 12 months to learn to knit and complete a Santa Christmas stocking. In January 2024, we headed to Tucson, AZ from Michigan. I immediately researched knitting lessons and found some offered at the Kirk-Bear Canyon Library. Off to class I went, where I met our current teacher, Ann Hunt.

In class, I started off knitting washcloths and a knitted hat. During the week, I began working on my stocking. I pulled it apart so many times and restarted it over and over again. I asked many questions and received so much help from Ann Hunt.

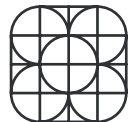
Months later, the stocking was complete. It had stretched and ended up rather big—but it was done. Not totally happy with it, I started knitting another one, this time trying to avoid pulling it apart and redoing it.

I successfully completed the new Santa stocking in the fall of 2024, just in time for Christmas! I put our daughter's surname on the stretched, oversized original Santa stocking. She plans to stuff it and hang it on her front door to welcome family, friends, and guests at Christmas!

Upon returning to Tucson in 2025, I once again attended knitting classes at the Kirk-Bear Canyon Library. I'm pleased to say I have successfully completed five more Santa Christmas stockings!

If you're interested in learning to knit or crochet, I highly recommend contacting the Kirk-Bear Canyon Library to check out the classes they offer. Thank you to Ann Hunt, knitters and all the library staff members for offering their time and skills to everyone!”

Sandra Millward



Event Spotlight

Michelle Yang on *Phoenix Girl*

last year, we offered **11,224** programs
and overall attendance reached **151,509!**

In May 2025 author Michelle Yang joined us at Martha Cooper Library for an author talk co-hosted by the Library's Welcome to America and Biblio Lotus teams. More than three dozen people gathered to listen to the author of *Phoenix Girl: How A Fat Asian Girl with Bipolar Found Love*.

Michelle delved into her memoir, which chronicles her journey from a tight-knit ethnic Chinese enclave in South Korea to her new life in Phoenix, Arizona, and beyond. In addition to being a translator for her parents, Michelle worked in her family's Chinese takeout restaurant starting at 12 years old, overcoming challenges and taking initiatives that shaped her into who she is today. With unflinching honesty, *Phoenix Girl* explores Michelle's struggle with Asian American identity, body image, mental health, and her eventual diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Ultimately, Michelle finds love, not only the romantic kind, but an enduring self-love, which allows her to heal, never give up, and thrive while successfully managing what later becomes a bipolar 1 diagnosis.

"My point of view is that trauma stories shouldn't be about what you went through, but about how you survived." – Michelle Yang



Monique Perez, Tara Foxx-Lupo, Michelle Yang, Lois Miller, Linda Goldie, Niki Giammarco, Talya Atallah, Rachel Spitz
Photo courtesy of Lois Miller



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Readers praise *Phoenix Girl*:

"This book promises those who are struggling that no matter their past and present difficulties, a bright future is possible."

"The journey of Michelle Yang is one of hope, health, and honesty. It drips with wisdom from a true trailblazer; the type of writing from a person who knows because she's lived through it."

"*Phoenix Girl* is not just about chasing the American Dream; it's about the complicated journey of trying to honor your family while finding your own voice."

"A poignant memoir of struggles with cultural identity, childhood trauma, body-image, and mental health. A story of strength, character, and healing. Beautifully and honestly written."

Black books are for everyone

In 2025, the Library's Kindred Team introduced Books Invited to the Cookout—an annual list centering books by Black authors and highlighting the Black community and diaspora.

As Jessica Pryde, Kindred team lead, says:

"Black books are for everyone, of all ages, from every background... Sit down a spell and explore the titles, complete with commentary from Kindred members about why we enjoyed every book, and why we think you might, too."

The booklet is broken down into eight sections focused on age/reading level and type. These aren't just picked willy-nilly; each book has been vetted by a member of the Kindred Team!

These titles are not the be-all and end-all of Black literature from last year. Instead, it is a list of titles that might have been missed by the big awards and influencers, but that are still more than worth picking up. Some are educational; some focus on the importance of Black joy. (Some are both!)

Overall, these books all highlight the variety and wonder that is Black life, both in the US and abroad.

Collecting more than four dozen titles published in 2024, from fiction and poetry to graphic novels and picture books, Books Invited to the Cookout has something for everyone.

The 2025 selection committee included Kindred Team members: Le'Sheland Hadley-Nihiser, Dana Moore, Chinyere Olumba, Jessica Pryde, and Debbi Wainwright.



Take a look at the titles include in the inaugural Books Invited to the Cookout: library.pima.gov/books-invited-to-the-cookout



Get to know the Kindred Team!
library.pima.gov/kindred



KINDRED
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Representation is not just necessary, it's TRANSFORMATIVE

Written by members of the Nuestras Raíces team

In 2004, the Spanish Services Committee at Pima County Public Library organized an event aptly named Nuestras Raíces. Inspired by the Border Book Festival in Las Cruces, New Mexico, the committee drew inspiration from the intersection of literature, art, and film to highlight the richness of our Latinx communities here in Tucson, Arizona. This three-day event occurred annually until it merged with the Tucson Festival of Books in 2009.

At its core, Nuestras Raíces celebrates and honors the culture, voice, and linguistic heritage of our Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities in Pima County. Our presence at the Tucson Festival of Books is a platform to tell our stories in our own voices with the help of emerging and award-winning Latinx and Indigenous writers.

One of the most rewarding and, at times, most challenging aspects of curating the Nuestras Raíces stage is creating panels that authentically reflect the depth, diversity, and intersectionality of nuestras comunidades. After inviting an incredible lineup of authors, the true labor of love begins: weaving their distinct stories and disciplines into conversations that resonate far beyond the festival weekend.

The success of Nuestras Raíces is the result of collaboration, dedication, and shared purpose. Our team of library staff spends months working together—researching, planning, and thoughtfully shaping discussions that honor our collective promise to bring engaging and representative programming to the Tucson Festival of Books. Every detail is considered with care: from how voices are paired to how themes reflect the corazón of our communities.

A standout example was *El Sueño Americano*, which brought together four remarkable storytellers—National Book Award–winning anthropologist Jason De León, journalist and advocate Paola Ramos, translator and immigration justice activist Alejandra Oliva, and author and advocate Rudy Ruiz. Though their mediums range from research to journalism and memoir to fiction, the thread uniting their work was the border itself: its people, its pain, and its promise. Together, they explored what it means to dream, to migrate, to belong, and to tell stories across lines both real and imagined.



NUESTRAS RAÍCES
PIMA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



Select members of the Nuestras Raíces Team (left to right): Aline Rowe, Marissa Alcorta, Hassael Cazesuz, Samantha Neville, Mary Pastrana

Equally powerful was *Powerhouse Chingonas Unite*, featuring Elizabeth Ferrer, Sandra Velasquez, Cynthia Pelayo, and Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez—four trailblazing authors whose work spans the curation of Latinx art including horror fiction, cultural empowerment, and memoir. Bringing together these chingonas was both a challenge and a joy. Each brings her own genre, voice, and vision, yet all share a commitment to visibility, sisterhood, and advocacy. Their collective energy filled the tent reminding us that representation is not just necessary, it's transformative.

Panels like these embody the mission of Nuestras Raíces: to create a space where our stories are centered, celebrated, and shared con orgullo y corazón.

Our Latinx Services Librarian, Samantha Neville mentioned, "Every single author and panel at the Nuestras Raíces stage is incredible. Throughout the weekend there are a range of emotions, from heavy discussions of social issues to light, funny moments like Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez's dogs jumping on stage mid-panel to be with her. It's really powerful to celebrate the success of these authors telling stories that aren't always included mainstream narratives. It is also rewarding to spread library joy during the festival. When we were giving away free books, I told a kid that he could take any book he wanted, that it was free, and he was so pleasantly surprised and happy that he opened his mouth and gaped like a fish. He couldn't believe it was free, and he was so excited to be able to take home a book to read."

There's no better combination!

Read to a Dog has long-been a staple of Library programming. Offered at a dozen libraries, it is a perennial favorite! This year, we decided to check in with a few participants.

Meet human Kamella from El Rio Library!

Before I met Kamella, age 6, and her mom Linda in person, I received an email that read:

My little girl and I are Read to a Dog groupies. We go to Finn at El Rio on Mondays, Sadie at Nanini on Tuesdays, Kobe at Woods on Wednesdays and Honey at Woods on Saturdays (sometimes Griffi at Nanini on Saturdays). My daughter LOVES the program—and it's invaluable to her in so many ways—so I'll take her for as long as she's interested!

A few weeks later, I sat down with Kamella and Linda at El Rio Library before the weekly Read to a Dog session with Finn. Fun fact... therapy dog Finn belongs to branch manager Morgen Daniels.

Kamella excitedly told me, "Finn taught me to read. He also sent me a birthday card! I made a frame and put Finn's picture in it!"



Finn and Kamella

The list of what they enjoy reading together is quite long! "We love Bad Kitty and Bruce the Bear. We read about caterpillars, butterflies, dogs, cats, and axolotls."

Once Finn entered the library, Kamella was at his side. It was time to chat with Linda.

Linda said, "Morgen and staff have become part of our family. We've built a community here, and at the other libraries we go to."

Last year, we offered 2,272 literacy programs for children and overall attendance reached 59,848!

Books have been a part of Kamella's family life since before she was born. Linda said, "There's a not a day I haven't read to her." She smiled, "When I was pregnant, I would read instruction manuals out loud while assembling furniture."

An author of early literacy books, Linda loves reading and writing. It only makes sense, then, that Kamella has taken after her mom as a reader. And thanks to Finn and other Read to a Dog pups, Kamella has a strong reading foundation, which I'm sure she'll build on for years to come.

Meet canine Honey from Woods Memorial Library!

What is Honey's favorite smell?

There are lots, but some of the top smells in Honey's book is the cheese bag from the fridge, books, and pup cups.

What is Honey's favorite toy?

Cow hooves

What is Honey's favorite book?

Roy Digs Dirt by David Shannon is a classic!

<https://bit.ly/RoyDigsDirt>

Does Honey have a favorite Read to a Dog memory?

- There are too many to count, but here are some:
- Honey loves the babies who attend Read to a Dog.
- She also loves when young readers can spell out a word by themselves or with help.
- She also likes when kids improve their reading skills!
- Honey gets excited when she recognizes her regular Read to a Dog friends.

If Honey could speak human to the kids who read to her, what would she say?

Honey would tell them to stay in school, thank them for reading her stories, and share with them how much she loves receiving pets and attention from readers.



Honey
Photo courtesy of Annie C.

Reading with dogs is for adults, too!

In September 2024, Paws for Grownups launched at Joyner-Green Valley Library! Many customers had asked why Read to a Dog was just for kids, so, without missing a beat, the staff introduced the program for adult readers to enjoy canine companionship. Offered twice monthly, adults are invited to read to Yorkshire terrier Louie, Golden Retriever Lucy, Husky mix Hopi, and Maltese-Poodle mix Mali.

Music lovers, stream local!

In June 2024, the Library launched Desert Streams, a locally-sourced streaming service. At the time it went live, Desert Streams featured 25 artists. Presently, it includes more than six dozen artists! Visit pima.desertstreams.org to enjoy music by artists in genres from world music and blues to folk and pop-rock.

Library staff Charlie Lewis, Karen Greene, and Lupita Chavez comprise the team responsible for bringing Desert Streams to fruition. We checked in with them about the service and what it means to them:

"I'm thrilled to be part of this effort to help connect people near and far to the abundance of musical talent of our region, and to the people who create it!" – Charlie Lewis

"There are so many fantastic bands in Pima County playing all different kinds of music. It's truly an honor to be able to feature this treasure and introduce more people to great music. And hopefully folks will find new reasons to go out and see live music and support local artists." – Karen Greene

"This program tops my list as one of the most fun and fulfilling projects in my 31 years with PCPL. I love our community. Through Desert Streams, I feel like I got to know and love it even more. I think everyone else will, too." – Lupita Chavez



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Karen Greene, Lupita Chavez, Charlie Lewis

We love recommending books...

and Pima County loves to read!

Here are our Top Ten book lists of the year:

- Betches Booklist: The Spiciest Romantasy Books to Read If You Loved A Court of Thorns and Roses.**
library.pima.gov/BetchesBooklist
- Películas LGBTQ en español**
library.pima.gov/PeliculasLGBTQ
- Children's Books to Celebrate Mes de la Cultura!**
library.pima.gov/ChildrensMesDeLaCultura
- 100 5th Grade Level Books with African Americans**
library.pima.gov/100FifthGradeBooks
- Romance Recs for Straight Men**
pima.gov/RomanceRecs
- Manga with Trans/Non-Binary Characters**
library.pima.gov/MangaWithTNB
- Books by Black Authors Adapted to Film**
library.pima.gov/BooksBlackAuthors
- Best Selling Manga 2023**
library.pima.gov/BestSellingManga
- 100 4th Grade Level Books with African Americans**
library.pima.gov/100FourthGrade
- 25 BookTok Books That Are Actually Worth the Hype**
library.pima.gov/25BookTokBooks

In total, library customers checked out **2,047,895** print materials!

In total, these lists had nearly 40,000 views!

Congrats to current and former PCPL staff Morgen D. Rachel W., Davida L., Angela H., June B., Shannah G., and Amy M. for sharing their suggestions!



Summer Reading was a BIAST!

Last year, we offered **4,020** children's programs and overall attendance reached **85,958!**



In 2025, the Library introduced a new feature to its Summer Reading Program... a Lotería board available in English and Spanish. The newly-imagine board was created by the Library's Community Engagement Office to celebrate the 2025 theme: Color Our World. It highlighted and celebrated the colors

found in Pima County, our cultures, library resources, and in books. Jam packed with fun activities, summer readers were encouraged to complete an activity and check off a square, just like a regular game of Lotería. Once completed—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally—participants earned a prize.

Summer Reading at Santa Rosa Library

Within a couple of weeks of the program's launch, Arantza and Jesus completed their first row of activities.

They also each submitted a Story Sketch:

Un Cactus Musculoso by Arantza library.pima.gov/UnCactus

Una Tarde Divertida con los Animales de Arizona by Jesus library.pima.gov/UnaTardeDivertida

Summer Reading at Sam Lena-South Tucson Library

Leilani De La Cruz decided to write a poem about her favorite summer activities:

I like to swim
Before the sun gets dim
To play in the pool
Feels nice and cool
We have lots of toys
And play lots of games
My siblings keep me busy
with them, days are never lame
School has a longer last
Summer sure does fly by
fast



Jesus and Arantza
Photo courtesy of Elma Shaffer

Their **PASSION** fuels the library!



In the past year, ten staff members shared thoughts about their path to the library, serving the community, and what brings them joy in the work.



"Customer service is beautiful because we share information, we interact with resources, and we express feelings that potentially impacts the way patrons see themselves when they leave our doors."

Lindsey Curley



"In a world that feels lonelier by the minute, libraries continue to offer us chances to connect and find community. I see first-hand the vital role that the library plays in people's lives far beyond the books on our shelves."

Sarah Tarver-Wahlquist



"You'll sometimes find me wandering around the library with my phone in my hand asking people if they'd like to be in a TikTok. Sometimes those requests are met with hesitation, but every time someone does agree, I get to witness them having fun and enjoying themselves in the process."

Victoria Manriquez



"The right to read is tied to our intellectual freedom and the need to make choices that will effectively lead us. Censorship hurts us by suppressing ideas and information. Suppressing ideas today will help suppress ideas tomorrow."

Chinyere Olumba



"I know how transformational the power of knowledge can be for all of us. Each person in our community has a right to see themselves and their story reflected in the body of knowledge we offer at the library, and to be empowered by what they find here."

Kate DeMeester-Lane

"I started reading to my kids the day each one came home from the hospital, and I was faithfully late taking them to Storytime at Nanini Library. [During COVID], I applied for jobs to bolster our stability, including at the library. Over and over, in moments when I've felt lost, I've found myself again at the library."

John Cafiero



"To our community, thank you for supporting us. Thank you for coming to see us, for sharing your stories, and for seeking out new stories in our libraries. Thank you for utilizing the spaces and resources we build and maintain for you. You are why we are here."

Linde Furman



"When you come to the library, please know that you have entered a place where you are welcome. Everyone is welcome. We will always celebrate you and your culture. No door is shut to you at the library. Please visit us. We would love to see you!"

Hilary Taber



"I'll be the first to admit it, I never saw myself working at the library. Working at the library is almost like one of those romantic daydreams you have that sound cute and whimsical but never actually happen. Well, it did happen to me!"

Raven Tautimer



"Managing a rural library is not without its challenges. Sometimes disaster strikes and it rains inside the library, but you just find some tarps and reach out to your helpers to move the library through another phase."

Daniela Buchberger



Farewell, and thank you!



Amber Mathewson
Photo courtesy of Reneé Bibby

Amber Mathewson retired as director of Pima County Public Library on June 7, 2025. In this article, she reflects on her 34-year career at the library:

It is both an honor and a deeply emotional time as I prepare to close this chapter of my professional life. After 34 years with Pima County Public Library—eight of those as Director—this moment is filled with gratitude, reflection, and hope for the future.

When I first walked through the doors of our library system, I knew I was entering a world where stories come to life, knowledge is boundless, and communities are built. What I didn't fully realize at the time was just how profoundly this journey would shape me. The library has been more than just a workplace; it has been a home

where I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the transformative power of literacy, the unyielding strength of community, and the magic that happens when people are given the resources and encouragement to grow.

Throughout my career, I have been inspired by the unwavering dedication of my colleagues, each of them bringing passion, creativity, and a deep commitment to service every single day. Together, we have built programs that extend far beyond bookshelves. We have created spaces that welcome, uplift, and empower. We have championed literacy not just within our walls, but in the very fabric of our community.

My involvement with Literacy Connects and Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest has only reinforced what I have always believed—that literacy is the foundation upon which opportunity is built. That libraries are more than repositories of books; they are gateways to lifelong learning, safe havens for curiosity, and catalysts for change. And that community service is not an obligation but a privilege that allows us to shape a world that is more informed, more compassionate, and more connected.

As I step into retirement, my heart is full knowing that the legacy of our work together will continue in the hands of remarkable individuals. The future of the library is bright, because it is powered by individuals who believe in its mission as fiercely as I do. Keep advocating for knowledge. Keep fostering curiosity. Keep opening doors for those seeking a better tomorrow.

Thank you to my colleagues, my mentors, and my friends. Thank you to the community that has trusted and supported this institution. And most of all, thank you for allowing me to be a part of something so much greater than myself.

Though I may be retiring from my role, my commitment to libraries, literacy, and lifelong learning will never fade. I look forward to seeing the continued impact of libraries in the lives of our community members.

Thank you.

Hello all,



I am thrilled to be joining Pima County Public Library this year and working alongside such an inspiring team. This Library has long held a strong reputation for its creative approaches to community engagement, a passion that I share. I am looking forward to advancing the goals of expanding access to library services throughout Pima County and enhancing our community-centered outreach, programs and services.

Libraries will always center literacy, but the ways in which we do that adapt to changes in technology and the environment. We support youth and adults in their learning by providing access to a wide range of resources and through services such as Homework Help and GED One-on-One Help. We foster technological literacy through Tech Help as well as classes. We expand information literacy by helping people navigate a wide variety of systems and resources. We ensure that everyone has a chance to access books, digital content, computers, and much more.

Libraries support community and individual growth by offering resources, programs, and services that connect people with the information that they need to take that next step—whether securing a job, learning about birding, reading their first book, or attaining an accredited high school diploma through Career Online High School. At Pima County Public Library, we celebrate our communities' strengths and distinctive qualities and promote joy, understanding, and kindness.

This is an exciting time to join Pima County, and I look forward to working alongside my colleagues in ensuring the best possible service. At the Library, we hope to restore operating hours and expand core programming. We will be convening a broader public conversation around the future of the library system and how it needs to evolve to meet the needs of Pima County's growing communities. We look forward to collaborating with you in this process.

And, as many have asked, I am growing accustomed to the weather although I haven't experienced a full summer here. Check back then!

I look forward to seeing you in our Pima County libraries!

Warmly,

Tess Mayer



Tess Mayer
Photo courtesy of Tess Mayer



Congratulations, GEMS!

Last year, two Library employees earned the title of Pima County GEMS:

Chinyere Olumba, Branch Manager, Woods Memorial Library

Karina Pacheco, Circulation Manager, Quincie Douglas Library

An employee recognition program, the “We A.R.E. Gems” recipients are recognized for exemplary performance and customer service, and for upholding the County’s values: Accountable, Respectful, Ethical.

Here’s what their nominators had to say:



“Chinyere Olumba fosters a warm and welcoming environment that makes every patron and staff member feel valued and included. Her leadership is evident in her calm and composed demeanor, even in challenging situations, where she consistently finds solutions that benefit both the team and the community.”

“Karina Pacheco stands out as a nominee for exceptional performance and exemplary contributions to her team and community. Through her unwavering commitment to accountability, respect, ethics, and outstanding customer service, Karina has become an invaluable leader and role model.”



Photo courtesy of Karina Pacheco

Recognized for their great work!

Brie Chillious earned the AzLA Outreach Services Award for providing exemplary outreach services to unserved, underserved, or minority populations:

“When Brie visits the schools, she goes the extra mile by dressing up in custom made dresses that she sews herself and reading stories to children based on the characters on her dresses. She wears earrings to compliment her outfits and spark the children’s interest in imaginative play and reading. Many, many children and parents have commented on Brie’s accessories, which leads to questions about books, reading and library resources. Her passion for her work shines as she works with children every day, both at outreach locations and inside the library, inspiring them to read and learn.”



Cintia Ramirez received the Louise A. Stephens Memorial Scholarship for her continuing education in the University of Arizona’s School of Information Resources and Library Science M.A. graduate program.

Of the scholarship, Cintia said:

“First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Louise A. Stephens Memorial Scholarship Committee for selecting me as a recipient and allowing me to continue pursuing my passion for librarianship. I would also like to thank all the amazing librarians and library staff who have helped me get to this point. I have been working in public libraries for almost eight years and have seen the immense impact libraries have on our communities. We are not a neutral space and should continue to strive to highlight the voices of those who have been marginalized and censored. I look forward to continuing my journey and working towards ensuring libraries remain vital spaces for learning and connection for everyone. Thank you once again for this honor.”



Library staff member **Perri Pyle**, manager of Frank De La Cruz-El Pueblo Library, received a Drachman Impact Award from the University of Arizona’s College of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture.

She was nominated by Kenny Wong, a professor in the department who brought his class to El Pueblo Library to collaborate on their semester projects focused on the Southside neighborhoods and, in particular, the El Pueblo Center and Library.

Read a Q&A with Perri on our website! library.pima.gov/QAPerri

Photos courtesy of Brie Chillious, Cintia Ramirez, Perri Pyle

Be yourself, we're here for everyone!

Since 1997, the Library's Pride Committee has committed itself to providing welcoming, inclusive opportunities for everyone. This includes sharing content and hosting programming celebrating and uplifting our LGBTQ+ community.

Our gratitude goes out to those who've shared positive feedback about the Pride emails they've received over the past year:

"At this time of marginalizing people, it makes me appreciate, even more, the focus of our Pima County Libraries. Thank you for taking a positive stance."

"I just wanted to say thank you. It makes me really happy. It feels very brave in these times. Take care!"

"Thank you so much for continuing to uplift our marginalized community members... especially in today's climate."

"Congratulations on your actions and attitude concerning Pride. I'm proud of you and of being a library card holder."

"You GO, Pima Libraries!! Thank you for embracing and supporting everyone in the community!"

"Thank you for sharing - how wonderful!"

"Thank you for important work, voice and advocacy, now more than ever!!!!!"

"Thank you for celebrating diversity through library programming. In this political climate, I am glad the library recognizes that we are not all the same in our sexual identities. Thanks so much!!"

"Thanks for doing this. The variety of things our Library system brings to our community is remarkable."

"Thank you for not caving to discrimination and hate in these disruptive times."

"Thank you for not being intimidated!!!! Super proud of Pima Library and Pima County!"

"Great to see this hasn't been canceled."



We our community!



More than **2.9** million people
(**2,969,232!**) visited libraries!

Thank you to all our customers who took the time to share with us what the library means to them. These are just a fraction of the comments we've received this past year.

"The events and amenities the library offers are awesome."

"The Pima County Public Library system is a GEM! A true treasure. The services offered from the magical books to the Culture Passes to the Seed Library are absolutely incredible and only serve to enrich this community."

"Staff listen carefully to customers. They are very dedicated."

"I love the library. I love that PCPL is actively and intentionally doing its best to center itself as localized community centers."

"You are a community hub! What's not to LOVE??"

"It's wonderful to have such an excellent library system at my fingertips—the staff is terrific!"

"The libraries have excellent study rooms and that is extremely important for students!"

"The library makes a huge amount of reading and other materials accessible to the community. The digital options are most appealing to me."

"The library offers many great resources, and no late fees makes it safer for low-income individuals."

"PCPL has convenient locations and a treasure trove of materials to check out."

"Library staff are unfailingly helpful and consistently cheerful."

"I feel joyful and lucky to have a library so close to me."

"Is there anything more democratic than libraries? Staff, selection of books, welcoming culture... the best!"

"My library rocks!"

“It became our second home.”

We received this kind post about Oro Valley Public Library and The Tree of Knowledge statue via Instagram from L.L. It made us smile, and we hope it does you, too

“This gorgeous statue, The Tree of Knowledge, is in front of my local library. Years ago, when I was a freshly single mom, I had to shoo my toddler away from climbing on it every time we visited, which was a lot. I was unemployed and scared, and the library became our second home. We needed something to do, so in the mornings, we’d go to the library. They had Storytime most days, and when they didn’t, there was always the massive children’s room. We’d stay and play until it was time for a nap. The library kept me sane and gave us a daily routine I could accord.

Now, my baby is nearly a teen; I have a good job and a wonderful partner, and the library has become our weekend thing. It’s nice telling my kid she can check out the books she desires. The library has probably saved me a gazillion dollars. More than that, I’ll forever be grateful to libraries everywhere for being a place anyone can go.”



Photo by L.L. Madrid

Major changes!



Josh Parra and Tara Foxx-Lupo

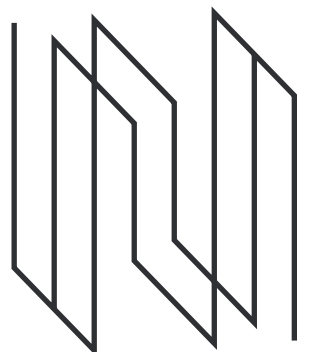
Between November 2022 and September 2024, **Martha Cooper Library** was closed for a major renovation and expansion. Among the changes and additions, the Library gained an expanded children’s space, an upgraded teen area, more books, a section for programming, additional space for studying, and outdoor improvements. In total, the library nearly doubled in size to 13,554 square feet!

On the day it reopened on September 17, 2024, nearly 900 people came to visit! A grand reopening celebration was held on November 16 and featured live music by Mamma Coal, crafts for kids, cake and snacks, and more. Joshua Parra, a longtime staff member at Martha Cooper Library spoke to the audience:

“My name is Josh, and I’ve been coming to Martha Cooper since I was about 14... 14 years ago. I’ve made so many wonderful memories in the last decade and a half. I’ve even met some of my best friends who I still talk to on a regular basis, here at this library; friendships that I will never take for granted. Even though, throughout the years I’ve gone through moves, acquired another job, I’m still given the privilege and opportunity to work here, even if it’s only once a week. Frankly, I just love working here and I want to continue working here as long as I can. Martha Cooper Library has made such a positive impact on my life as I know it has to a lot of our patrons currently, as well as those of the past and the future to come! Thank you for listening to my story and I’ll see you in the library!”

“Nestled in the heart of the Garden District, Martha Cooper library is as lovely outdoors as it is inside. The park-like area on the North side of property is a great place to walk or chillax. The library interior is spacious, inviting, and responsive.”

– Tara Foxx-Lupo, Manager



Happy (e)Reading!

In total, library customers downloaded **3,373,071** digital items!



We reached a record-breaking two million (2,292,401 to be exact!) digital Libby checkouts in 2024! This milestone illustrates the continued growth and importance of library lending of ebooks, audiobooks and other digital content as well as the library's success in serving all members of the community.



A great partnership

Literacy Connects offered English Language Acquisition for Adults classes at libraries across the county. Last year, attendance reached **19,984!**



Graduates Weigh In!

I am proud to say that I am a mother who graduated the Career Online High School Program with a career certificate in **Child Care**. I want to share this message with all mothers: **we also have dreams and personal goals**. We deserve to fight for ourselves. I encourage you to believe in your abilities, to never give up, and to overcome every challenge that comes your way.

Cinthia



Adeana

"Balancing school with family life was a challenge, but Career Online High School guided me through it with so much support. I never felt alone in the process. They truly want to see you succeed. This diploma represents strength, growth, and the example I want to set for my children that with determination and the right support, anything is possible."

Adeana



Cinthia

We offered **1,386** workforce development programs and overall attendance reached **6,399!**

196 students have graduated since the program began in 2016.

Photos courtesy of Cinthia and Adeana

Three cheers for Story Sketches!

Released in December 2024, "Why Plankton Is Small" by Hayden became the single most-frequently watched video ever posted on any PCPL YouTube channel! If you missed it, here's a young Tucsonan's tale of how once-mighty plankton became tiny organisms: library.pima.gov/PlanktonStory

Do you know someone between 5 and 18 that wants to submit a story?

Learn more on our website: library.pima.gov/storysketches



Many Nations and Operation Warm



The Many Nations Team distributed jackets and shoes at an outreach event in collaboration with Operation Warm, a national nonprofit that manufactures brand-new, high-quality coats and shoes for children in need. They handed out 60 coats and 60 pairs of shoes. They also gave away 63 books and created 10 new library cards. The leftover coats and shoes were given to Tucson Unified School District's Native American Student Services for distribution at other events that serve Indigenous students.



Staff member Melissa Salazar & teen volunteer Brian
Photo courtesy of Alina Rowe

Library Love

In summer 2024, two longtime customers approached the Nanini Library service desk to share with staff that it was their 64th wedding anniversary. They said they wanted to do something special to mark the occasion, so they visited their favorite library.

You are #WORTHY

On September 14, 2024, at Eckstrom-Columbus Library, the Synapse Team presented #W.O.R.T.H.Y. with Vana Dee Lewis. The event—for individuals ages 10 to 20—focused on learning to respect one’s mental health and emotional wellness while creating a vision board. Participants received a t-shirt, journal, pen, affirmation cards, and resources for self-worth empowerment.

Here’s what a couple participants told us:



Vana Dee Lewis

This was an amazing event! #W.O.R.T.H.Y. needs to reach more of our young people. We should all be vulnerable without it being weird!

This event reminded me of my value. I also learned a lot about health benefits and mental health awareness.

Thank you for having this program. I would give this library 10 out of 10. Thank you

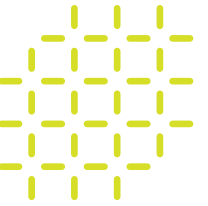
Photos courtesy of Vana Dee Lewis



FRIENDS OF THE
ORO VALLEY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Friends Share

In November 2024, the Friends of the Oro Valley Public Library held their four-day Fall Book and Jewelry Sale. They made over \$24,000 with over \$11,000 of that on the first day. This was their second biggest sale on record! We greatly appreciate our Friends for all their hard work and dedication to the library. Their sales always draw in customers and provide a welcome atmosphere of book lovers sharing their joy of reading and love of the library.



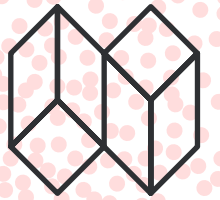
Vote!

Partnership

Of the 18 early voting locations used by the Pima County Recorder’s Office for early and emergency voting, 10 of those locations were library branches! Pima County Recorder Gabriella Cázares-Kelly says, “Our partnership makes voting so much more accessible to Pima County Voters. One of my favorite things about telling people where to go is telling them the name of their local library and hearing them respond with, I know where that is! That’s MY local library! You are a beloved and sacred space, and we appreciate the work you do for our entire community.”

Drum roll... in total, **22,032** voters were issued ballots at libraries between October 9 and November 4, 2024.

Celebrating the SEASONS OF PIMA COUNTY with beautiful, limited-edition library cards



Last year, we hosted a library card design contest featuring art that captured the seasons of Pima County. More than 400 submissions were received and it was quite the challenge to narrow it down to the finalists, of which 128 were chosen. From there, six pieces of art were selected for limited-edition library cards.

We checked in with the winners and asked them what inspired their artwork. Here's what they had to say:

Our total cardholders peaked at 320,475!

Chelsea Lindholm

The Strolling Saguaro and the Looming 'Soon

Digital

When I think of Pima County seasons, monsoons are my first thought. A typical Arizona transplant, I find myself missing deciduous seasons like fall, but monsoon season here in the desert scratches that itch. Seeing a distant wall of dark blue-grey clouds to the south instantly builds anticipation for flashes of lightning and breaks of thunder. Though the downpour may be brief, monsoons bring greenery and vibrancy to a sun-tired desert, and blooms erupt from happy cacti. My strolling saguaro may get caught by the storm, but he'll continue to grow and benefit from the life-giving rain year after year.



Tracy Ann Holmes

Summer Monsoon

Watercolor

I love the amazing clouds that boil and build on hot summer afternoons. They build until they can no longer contain the water and electricity explodes in light and sheets of water. Add to that the stunning sunsets and you have an amazing show!



Ed Flores

San Xavier Mission: After the Monsoon

Photography

I visited the San Xavier del Bac Mission with a friend who was relocating from Tucson. Since she had never been there before, she invited me to join her, and I happily brought my camera to take some pictures of the mission for her.

While we were exploring, it started to rain, so we decided to wait it out. As the storm cleared, the clouds began to part, revealing a beautiful scene. Awestruck, it took a moment for me to realize I had a camera with me, so I quickly snapped a few photos before the clouds completely slipped away. We were so fortunate that we were able to be a witness to the beauty that we had just seen.



Jane Madsen

Jackrabbit in Spring Colors

Machine embroidery

I am inspired by the animals and plants of our beautiful desert, and the jackrabbit is one of my favorites. I decorated this jackrabbit with the brightly colored flowers, cactus and plants of the desert, as he rests next to a majestic saguaro. I would love to remind people of the delicate ecosystem the jackrabbit thrives in.



Debbie Gallerani

Tucson or Bust

Mixed media paper & acrylics

I decided to create a series of bright and amusing scenes with the mid-century modern desert animals I have been currently drawing. As a big fan of road trips, I found it fitting to have oh-so-cool Coyote, and super chill Mountain Lion hop into their retro turquoise convertible to cruise the Sonoran Desert and enjoy the spectacular sights. I would love to join them, wouldn't you?



Sierra Lauman

Neighborhood Stories

Digital

From thundering rains to bright summer days, to fields of wildflowers, there's always something to admire in the desert throughout the year. Equally as beautiful is the wildlife that thrives in this landscape. Taken together, the stories and images that are woven from this imagery are second to none. It's thoughts of these surroundings, as well as the fantasy of being able to share stories with the local wildlife, that inspired this piece.



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