

Best Sellers

Our favorite stories about your Library's impact • WINTER 2017

Curiosity Connects with Kids

Curiosity may be dangerous for cats, but we believe it is absolutely essential for kids! Skyla is a good example. She's a bright and charming 6-year-old with unfettered curiosity about everything around her. What better

her all about the pictures. She just soaks up information like a sponge."

The day last fall that Skyla read her first book aloud was a landmark event. "We got home from the Library, after Skyla had showed the librarians some of the

thing aloud to me. I caught it on video, and she absolutely couldn't wait to show Miss Brenda the next day! The librarians were so supportive, congratulating and encouraging her for this big achievement. The impact on her self-esteem was amazing."

The first book is a huge milestone, but to Steffi, the Library represents even more than reading. "It is so awesome to watch kids learn something," she says. "You can see the light bulb moment...that instant when a new wrinkle in their brain is formed and they confidently grab hold of something new. I am so grateful for the opportunity to raise these kids, and for the Library as a resource to help me do it."

"You can see the light bulb moment...that instant when a new wrinkle in a child's brain is formed and they confidently grab hold of something new." (Stephi Nettleton, aunt)

place to indulge that curiosity than at the Library?

"We've been visiting the Library every week for the last couple of years," says her aunt, Stephi Nettleton. "Skyla is a super-fast learner. So to help keep her challenged, and because I love to read, I started bringing Skyla, her brother and her cousin to the Library."

The deal is that each child picks a topic he or she wants to learn about. "We get here, and the kids go racing off to the children's room," laughs Stephi. "They can't wait to ask Miss Brenda or Miss Ashley for a book on kittens, or construction, or whatever captures their interest that day." Their tastes range pretty far afield. "Last summer, Skyla picked up a book about Eskimo art, of all things," Stephi shares. "It was too hard for her to read, but she wanted me to tell

words she knew in books," recalls Stephi. "She sat down with a very simple early reader book, and she read the whole



● Skyla's eclectic reading tastes also include Star Wars!

The Flint Fountain of Youth

Our society prizes youth. Sit down with a magazine or the TV remote, and you'll be stunned by the sheer number of products promising younger skin, fewer wrinkles, and less gray hair.

The media may tout miracle potions to keep us young, but faithful Library patron Mr. Robert (Bob) Hughes knew better. If he were still with us, he would probably agree with Sophia Loren: *"There is a fountain of youth. It is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love."*

By that standard, Bob Hughes never aged! He visited the Library at least once or twice per week, sometimes more. He would stop in to chat with librarian Michael Madden about the news and current events. He would seek out

recommendations in his favorite genres, nonfiction and mystery. "He was the most wonderfully friendly person," Michael remembers. "Mr. Hughes loved to smile, to talk, and to meet new people. He had this insatiable curiosity about everything."

Michael and Bob cultivated a genuine and abiding friendship. "We lived parts of our lives in the same places, and shared a love of local history," notes Michael. "He was such a vibrant and interesting man. I had him pegged as being in his mid-70s. Not until I saw his obituary did I realize he was 89 years old!"

Bob's daughter called Michael last year to share the news of his passing. "She said he died reading a book in his lawn chair. He would have loved that idea," says Michael.

The Library was a special place to Mr. Hughes. When his daughter called, she noted that Bob spoke often of Michael and his friends at the Library. In gratitude and respect, the family chose to make a wonderful estate gift to the Library, honoring Bob's life and the fulfillment he found through this place of community.

"I miss Mr. Hughes," Michael says. "He was one of those people it's just a pleasure to know."



Mr. Hughes was a living testimony to the library's vision. For him, and for countless others, the Library is the go-to place to learn for life!

Even If You've Built It, They Can't Always Come

Picture a father who enters Flint Public Library, a little hesitant and a little unsure. He's flanked by his two young daughters, whose enormous eyes hold both uncertainty and curiosity. They touch their fingers to the glass of the fish tank as they slowly look around the Children's Learning Place. They're not sure where to go, or what to do...there are so many choices!

An hour later, those same two girls are at the Tinker Table, laughing with other kids as they play. They've each picked out a book to take home. Shyly they make their way to the check out desk, and are very proud to accept their very own new Library cards. Their dad says quietly, "I am 40 years old, and this is the first time I've ever been in the library. I want this for my girls."

What finally got this family to visit the Library? It was the personal experience with a librarian who came out to their housing development to share story time and information.

Librarian Donna Comstock-Herman spends a good deal of her time visiting housing developments, Y Safe Places, and after school programs. "These kids are hungry for books," she says. "They love coming to story time and doing crafts. They are so engaged and excited."

Why is outreach important? "Transportation is the issue," Donna notes. "I hear it every day. The parents don't have a car, or they are not close to the bus line, or they don't have money



"We're changing children's lives by equipping their parents to help them read."

for the bus. There are literally thousands of kids in Flint who can't get to the Library. We are trying to reach people who would otherwise not be reached."

In addition to story time and crafts, Donna also shares information with parents about programs such as Dolly Parton Imagination Library. "I always leave with at least a few completed applications in hand," she says.

Through this program, kids receive one

book per month in the mail. It's another way to extend the Library's reach and give parents the resources to work on reading with their kids.

"Parents want to participate in their children's learning," says Donna. "Our outreach programs provide them with opportunities and expose them to the Library's resources. We're changing children's lives by equipping their parents to help them read."



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is to be Flint's go-to place
to learn for life.**

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The Never-Ending Vacation

I don't remember a time when I didn't love to read," says Nancy Duffy, former Flint resident and lifelong library supporter. "My grandmother read to me when I was a child. My parents also stressed reading for learning and pleasure. When I was old enough, I would take the bus to the Library. I spent as much time there as I could. It was like a mini-vacation for me! I liked to browse the stacks, or curl up in a corner with a book."

Nancy's mother, Martha Hagle, walked her talk about reading...literally. When she moved back to Flint in the 70s, she made her home within walking distance of the Library. "My mother appreciated the large-print books by that time," Nancy shares. "That format made it much easier for her to carry on her love of reading, and helped

her gain maximum enjoyment from her Library visits."

Nancy and her husband now live in Birmingham, but her love of the library and reading continues unabated. Although her eyesight no longer permits her to read a printed book, she has joined the National Library Service Talking Book program to indulge her favorite pastime. "It's not exactly like holding a book," Nancy admits. "The story is interpreted through a reader, not through my own head and voice. But I am grateful that books exist in this format. Without them, I would be at a loss."

Flint Public Library offers books for every age, in every format. Help a child learn to read, and you will create a lifelong book lover. And, as Nancy says, you'll have a mini-vacation available for the rest of your life, whenever you need to take it!



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