

Best Sellers

Our favorite stories about your Library's impact • SUMMER 2019

A New Librarian in the Making

Some young people have their career path nailed down at a young age. But for Isayas Fields, the ah-ha moment came after he spent time job shadowing three staff members at Flint Public Library.

“I did the job shadow here because it was convenient, not because I really had any interest!” Isayas confesses. “But once I got done, I knew: I want to be a librarian!”

Isayas has spent quite a bit of time at the Library lately. He attends online high school classes every Thursday, and uses the Library both to take his classes as well as to help with his homework. He says that three of the staff members have been especially helpful to him: Sarah Brooks, Alonzo Hill and Ann Manko.

“I knew a library would have librarians, but I didn’t know they would care,” Isayas notes. “I used to come here and study, or take online Kahn Academy courses, but I never asked for help before I started my online high school program. It’s hard to ask for help, but they are all so nice. They’ve made it possible for me to succeed in my studies and graduate this spring!” Isayas says he didn’t really know what librarians did, but now he has a better understanding. “You have to be patient and caring. You have to be good at listening and want to help people.”

It hasn’t been an easy road for Isayas. “I was going to Flint Southwestern Academy but my grades were not so good,” he confesses. “I knew I could do better. So I transferred to this online program. I still get to see my friends, but the online school was important for my grades. I’m retaking some classes and filling in what I missed so I can graduate.”

Isayas has explored many facets of the Library in addition to what he needed for school. “I’ve gone to a couple of Armchair Traveler sessions because I like old films,” he shares. “I bring a notebook and jot down important things. It’s so cool to see different parts of the world through those videos. I’m also the only teenager at the Fiction-Only Book Club! I love the books we’re reading, and I like to share opinions with the people who are older than me.”



● Isayas Fields (center) with his Library friends Ann Manko and Alonzo Hill

Isayas will graduate in June, and hopes to pursue a degree in computer science at the University of Michigan. Then he wants to go on to work in the Library. He is one of three people in his graduating class of 50 who was invited to give a speech. Most students would not think to thank their local Library staff, but Isayas feels differently! He can’t say enough good things about Sarah, Alonzo and Ann. He shared the following excerpt from his speech:

“It’s not enough to simply try to get by in life. That doesn’t move the world forward. You must try to excel in everything you do; strive for excellence in every task, large or small...”

“After I give this speech, I want to go see Mrs. Manko one last time, give her one last hug before I go to University of Michigan, and thank her for everything, she has done for me. Without her help I wouldn’t be able to wear this cap and gown.”

“What’s Your Perspective?”

Browsing for books can be a bit daunting, especially with a collection the size of the one Flint Public Library offers to patrons! How do you know what’s good? What if you want to try a new author? We have an answer for you, and it’s called the Fiction-Only Book Club!

“This club has been meeting for 20 years, and some of the original members still attend,” says Ann Manko, Librarian, who organizes the group. “We have about 40 people on our roster right now, and usually 15-20 show up for each meeting. Our members are telling people about it, and the numbers are growing. We used to order about 10 copies of the book we chose each month. Now we’re ordering 20 copies!”

What’s this club about? “We want to introduce members to books about various races, ethnicities and cultures,” Ann says. “I also want to help people discover great books they might not otherwise pick up.” This is a friendly group. Many of them come for the camaraderie as much as for the book discussion!

The group gets together on the third Wednesday of most months at noon for about an hour. They discuss the book of the month and share perspectives on what they read. “I provide some questions, but it’s really just a chance for people to share their opinions with each other,” Ann notes. “A lot of our members have great life experiences and they add a lot to the conversation. I think the reason it’s lasted so long is that the members are such interesting, intelligent people!”

Cherie Palmer joined the Fiction-Only Book Club three years ago when she retired. “I love the discussions,” she says. “It’s especially interesting when people share different opinions or perspectives. Ann is a wonderful moderator, and our conversations are never boring! It expands my mind and also helps me get to know new people.”

What are some of the group’s recent favorites?

- “The 100-Year Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared,” by Jonas Jonasson, tells the story of an older man who decides to go on a madcap adventure. Ann shares, “It was funny, and our group liked it.”



- “40 Days Without Shadow,” by Olivier Truc, introduced the group to reindeer herding in Lapland. “This mystery immersed us all in a totally different culture,” Ann says.

FOLLOW ALONG EVEN IF YOU CAN’T ATTEND!

If you find it difficult to come to a meeting during the middle of the day, don’t worry! You can still get the recommendations and read the books. Just visit www.fpl.info and click “Join In.” You can either browse the calendar or download the Program Guide to find information about what the Fiction-Only Book Club is reading. The books are available from the Library, or you can download the e-book using Overdrive. (And remember...if you’re not sure about how to download an e-book, contact the Library at 810.249.2569 and schedule your free “Book an Expert” session!)

DONOR LIST CORRECTION: WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE WILLIE AND VERONICA ARTIS AS SPECIALIST LEVEL SUPPORTERS IN 2018, AND WE APOLOGIZE FOR LISTING THEM INCORRECTLY IN THE PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER.

Promises Kept

No one would ever say that the water crisis was good for Flint. But we can absolutely say that this crisis has showcased the heart of the city and the resilience of its people. Anna Clark can tell you about it firsthand.

Anna is a freelance journalist and author in Detroit who loves to tell stories about cities. She wrote about Flint's master planning process, and she penned an early story about the water crisis in 2015.

Then someone approached her to write a book. "There was a huge spotlight on Flint at the time," Anna recalls. "I didn't want to write a thin, superficial treatment of the issue. Fortunately, that's not what I was asked to do. Instead, I was able to write a thoughtful story about the deep-rooted social inequality and poor management that led to this crisis. I wanted this book to help us change how we treat our cities."

Anna spent a lot of time in Flint working on this project. Where did she find herself? At the Library! "I stayed with a delightful couple who welcomed me into their home for weeks at a time," Anna recalls. "They lived within walking distance of the Library, so I would go there often to research and write. I also enjoyed activities and programs while I was there, just like a regular patron."

Anna discovered previously unknown roots in Flint. "It turns out my grandmother was born here," she says. "My great-grandfather

Stop by the Library to borrow Anna's book, "The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy" or purchase a copy and benefit the Library at the same time!

worked at General Motors. He was occupying the plant during the Sit-Down Strike of 1936-1937. The strikers weren't supposed to leave, but he somehow talked his way out for a quick hospital visit to see his new daughter! Although my grandmother's family moved not long afterwards, I loved learning this little bit of family history that connected me to Flint."

When Anna started her book in 2016, she promised that a portion of the proceeds would go back to Flint in some way. "I didn't want to just take the stories," she explains. "I wanted to give back, but do so in a way that was truthful and transparent. I didn't know how exactly I was going to do it at the time. After spending

so much time at the Library, I came to respect its role in the history of Flint as well as for its future. That's when my choice became clear."

Anna has chosen to fulfill her promise by giving a portion of all book proceeds back to the Library. "The opportunity to write this book was a gift. I'm very grateful for all the community has shared with me, and to the Library for being a hub of the community. This is a trusted institution in a city where trust is justifiably unstable. My experiences here affirmed my faith in a vibrant future for Flint and the people who live in it. I'm honored to say thanks in a tangible way."



● Anna Clark during one of her Library visits



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is to be Flint's go-to place
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Expand Your Universe!

Apollo 11 landed on the moon on July 16, 1969. Fifty years later, we're still adventuring in space, discovering the universe in ways no one dreamed possible back then.

But you don't need to shoot off in a rocket to explore. There's a "Universe of Stories" waiting for you as part of the Flint Public Library Summer Reading Challenge. (Happily, it's far more cost-effective than the space program!) Summer reading is a great way to get kids excited about following their interests and exploring new ideas.

The books themselves are fun, but the prizes are what really get the kids' attention! We have bikes, tablets and many other goodies for the kids who diligently read and record their accomplishments.

Join us on Saturday, June 15 from 1:00-4:00pm as we kick off this year's adventure. Can't make it to the Library that day? No problem! You can sign your kids up online

and record their reading at fpl.info/summer-reading-challenge.

The fun keeps going until our finale on August 17. We'll have exciting events every Saturday, including family-friendly music, comedy and more. You can bring your kids to the Library to record their reading, pick out more books, and stay for the fun.

We are also thrilled to take our show on the road again this year, thanks to funding from the Ben Bryer Foundation. Some of our children's staff, plus Summer Youth Initiative volunteers, will bring story time, books and crafts out to area kids at Y Safe Places, Freedom Schools and more. Last year, the team saw approximately 1,000 kids ages 5-12 on their community visits. They reach families who might not otherwise have the means to get to the Library. It helps parents find out what's available and also helps the kids keep their reading abilities sharp over the summer.