



Executive Director's Report January 2025

Letters went out to staff regarding the cost of living and market increase, as well as the sign-off of acceptance on Paylocity for personnel policy and job description changes. Many staff members have come to me to thank the Board for the increases they received this year.

We put our interest in community solar out to bid; unfortunately, there were no projects for us at this time. I will let you know if something comes up.

Staff sweatshirts were given as holiday gifts. I think they have been the most popular gift we have given. You will see staff wearing them often. The Friends of the Library have agreed to cover the cost of the sweatshirts. We ordered a few extra so that new employees could get a sweatshirt if they wanted to.

The Friends approved \$54,450 in funding requests for the 2025 year, covering the following:

- 4th of July Parade
- Summer and winter reading programs
- Library of Things and Cricuts for the Branches
- Dress forms for the Workshop
- Maker in Residence program
- Staff breakroom snacks, coffee, and tea
- Staff wellness activities
- Family gingerbread house programs
- Story walk panel,
- Outreach promotions and activities

We are so grateful for all the Friends have done to support us.



Calendar

- SLSF (Special Leisure Services Foundation) Holiday Lunch 12/11
- New POC Director Seth Moland-Kovash 12/18
- Library Foundation 12/18
- Journeys Memorial 12/20
- Rotary 1/7, 1/14
- Friends 1/7,
- Lunch with Palatine Park District Executive Director 1/8
- Local Library Leaders 1/13
- CCS orientation 1/14

AARP TAX Prep

Last year, we began offering AARP tax preparation in our meeting room. This partnership has been very successful, and we plan to expand our hours this year.

- 158 tax returns were processed
- 73% of those were for people aged 60 and above
- 60% had an annual income under \$50,000

Plumbing Work

We had a last minute addition to the Board packet and agenda this month. It is for the repair of plumbing that will stop a leak and prevent it from getting even bigger. The leak has not caused damage and we have a moisture sensor monitoring the area to alert us if the leak gushes. Staff noticed the leak and immediately investigated the issue. The repair is needed to replace some rusted pipes, causing a backflow valve to remain slightly open and thus leak. This repair involves shutting off the main water to the library for eight hours. We would like to pay extra for premium time so we do not have to close the library. Our plumber can do the repair on a Friday after close.

New Employees



- Debbie joined us as a Member Services Assistant
- Steven was promoted to Member Services Associate
- Cameron and Nicola were hired as Materials Assistants in Member Services

Employee Milestones



Emily Patti and Kaitlin Mathers both celebrated their 5 year anniversary.



Staff You Should Know

Maridsa is our Communications Strategist. She helps prepare all things print for our communications. She also helps develop relationships outside of the library. She is a team player and has chaired more than one library committee, but you don't have to take my word for it. See what Maridsa's coworkers have to say about her:

"Thank you for your help!"

"You are the best."

"I appreciate you"

"I'm so impressed with how much work you have done for the 100 year and specifically the mini golf event - between planning, finding sponsors, keeping our comms team organized, doing your regular work duties, promoting the event, putting together the fall newsletter, making sure the rest of the staff was informed, etc.! You are a rockstar and I appreciate you ❤️"

Goal 1

Maintain high levels of service by investing in staff: providing sufficient tools and training, optimal staffing levels, advancement opportunities, and fair compensation, while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

- The salary benchmarking project was conducted with HR Source, and the market-adjusted salary schedule was approved and implemented.
- Split the Technology Department into two new departments: Workshop Department and Information Technology Department. To support these new departments, we made several staffing changes.
- Using staff feedback and input, we increased benefits in Policy 9, including an increase in anniversary bonuses.
- Studied testing methods for bilingual employees and created a plan for bilingual pay.

21% Complete
57% In Progress



9% Complete
85% In Progress

Goal 2

Increase visibility and remove barriers to participation for all members of our diverse community through meaningful engagement, increased partnerships, and targeted communications.

- Postcards have been sent to new residents moving into the District to introduce them to the Library and invite them to sign up for a card. This had been delayed by seasonal postal issues.
- Discussions with District 15 on promoting their new Spanish Pre-K program and assisting with afterschool programs at the Rand Road Branch.
- Bilingual volunteer posting has been translated into Spanish and awaiting implementation in January.
- Research into language translation services will begin soon by the Communications department.

Goal 3

Adapt programs and collections to deliver relevant content that serves changing community needs by restructuring systems, dedicating resources to these activities, and engaging in ongoing dialogue between members and staff.

- Hired additional part-time staff for the Workshop, promoted a staff member to Workshop Assistant Manager, and posted a job opening for Workshop Manager.
- Began implementation of LibraryIQ, a subscription service that will help analyze our collection and the demographics of our service area.
- Increased youth program attendance with Dinovember week of themed programming.
- Trained Rand Road Branch staff on Workshop and equipment so they can provide instruction to Spanish-speaking members in the future.
- Hosted a community ofrenda for de Dia de Muertos to provide culturally relevant programming.

34% Complete
44% In Progress



60% Complete
20% In Progress

Goal 4

Begin to understand how the library will serve the Palatine community of the future by developing a long-term plan for existing and potential new spaces.

- Researched and discussed District 15 community school.
- Met with new POC and Park District Executive Director to discuss possible partnerships.
- Completed outreach report.
- Board members attended ILA legislative meetups to talk with local legislators.
- Completed ballot certification for trustee election.



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status
Goal 1:		Maintain high levels of service by investing in staff: providing sufficient tools and training, optimal staffing levels, advancement opportunities, and fair compensation, while maintaining fiscal		
	1.1	Use benchmarking and internal library data to identify and achieve optimal	reduce turnover by ____% and increas	
	1.1.1	Investigate other sources of salary benchmarking (other than HR Source)	2024	Complete
	1.1.2	Review job descriptions in advance of salary benchmarking. Include bilingual skills and other specialized requirements in job descriptions.	2024	Complete
	1.1.3	Rewrite PTO policies from the ground up for clarity	2024	Complete
	1.1.4	Identify need for new, additional, or changed positions to support Strategic Plan, and hire new staff.	2024	In Progress
	1.1.4	Hire outside consultant to do time/work study	2025	In Progress
	1.1.5	Review existing library data (exit interviews and EE survey) for feedback about compensation and benefits	2025	In Progress
	1.1.6	Ask staff about employee recognition	2025	Complete
	1.1.7	Evaluate job descriptions and postings for approachable language (less jargony) to attract diverse candidates	2026	Not Started
	1.2	Consolidate training tools into an easy-to-use platform and allocate sufficient time for staff completion of recommended training.		
	1.2.1.0	Choose Learning Management System: investigate, get demo and pricing for Paylocity/SharePoint LMS.	2024	In Progress
	1.2.1.1	Implement chosen LMS. Communicate changes to staff and offer trainings for all staff, staff who will manage content, and staff who will administrate the system.	2024	Not Started
	1.2.2	Create procedures for creating and capturing internal training materials (videos, handouts, etc) and for saving them to Sharepoint or adoped LMS. Must complete 1.2.1 first.	2024	Not Started
	1.2.3	Organize training pages on intranet. Must complete 1.2.1 first.	2024	In Progress
	1.2.4	Analyze time needed for training	2025	In Progress
	1.2.5	Schedule training - give dedicated time to compete training (off desk time, Dept. meetings, Lunch and Learn) utilizing information from study and tools created	2025	In Progress
	1.2.6	Set standards (including technology skills) by job description for training	2026	Not Started



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status
		1.2.7 Create training tools based on staff job titles	2026	Not Started
		1.2.8 Review and standardize new hire training (by depts, skills)	2026	Not Started
		1.2.9 Study how other organizations incentivize bilingual staff (not just libraries) and use results (incentivize language learning)	2025	In Progress
		1.2.10 Include language learning and certificates in tuition reimbursement	2025	In Progress
1.3		Understand and prioritize staff needs for supplies, equipment and space.		
		1.3.1 Research how staff want to receive information (enews, intranet, weekly brief, other), document what gets shared where, examine whether to continue weekly. Study recent staff engagement survey results and conduct new surveys or inquiries if needed.	2024	Complete
		1.3.2 Schedule M Team time to review recurring issues and assess changes - periodically go	2024	Not Started
		1.3.3 Develop a method to regularly evaluate department/staff needs (in-house and WFH) and	2024	Not Started
		1.3.4 Plan a renovation of staff and meeting spaces on the 1st floor, with the aim to renovate	2024	Not Started
		1.3.5 Replace PC workstations, for both staff and members, with up-to-date equipment. Provide	2024	In Progress
		1.3.4 Study work area efficiency (use consultant?)	2025	In Progress
1.4		Provide more growth and advancement opportunities at all levels to increase		
		1.4.1 Evaluate increasing retention bonus for long time employees (vs. new hires)	2024	Complete
		1.4.2 Create levels/tiers for positions (i.e. Librarian, Library Associate) leads, including bilingual	2025	In Progress
		1.4.3 Re-evaluate and re-write performance review criteria by department and position to	2024	Not Started
		1.4.4 Evaluate methods or rewards for staff to join outside committees or organization	2024	Not Started
		1.4.5 Provide online access to online courses, seminars to encourage learning	2025	In Progress
		1.4.6 Create temporary position to fill vacancy if we are not finding right candidate	2025	In Progress
		1.4.7 Investigate mentoring and job shadowing	2025	In Progress
		1.4.8 Career path or map	2025	In Progress
1.5		Revisit tuition reimbursement and conference attendance policy to make		
		1.5.1 Give more flexibility for managers to approve training during year	2024	Complete
		1.5.2 Review and expand conference attendance guidelines for exempt and non-exempt staff	2024	In Progress
		1.5.3 Define tuition reimbursement (vs. training) & streamline process	2024	In Progress



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status	
		1.5.4	Increase tuition reimbursement allowance - compare to benchmark libraries	2025	In Progress
		1.5.5	Offer reimbursement for language learning paths	2025	In Progress
Goal 2:		Increase visibility and remove barriers to participation for all members of our diverse community through meaningful engagement, increased partnerships, and targeted communications.			
	2.1	Develop a targeted communication plan utilizing social media, digital, and print to increase visibility of the library and its extensive services for non-users and the underserved.			
		2.1.1	Study Community Survey to determine other reasons people are not engaged/served	2024	In Progress
		2.1.2	Evaluate text reminder services for events/services	2024	In Progress
		2.1.3	Create a team and a strategy to distribute promos outside/outreach events	2024	In Progress
		2.1.4	Study/survey local libraries for common translation practices	2025	In Progress
		2.1.5	Develop flexible translation guidelines based on communication demos for digital/print communication	2025	In Progress
		2.1.6	Examine non-traditional methods for event/service reminders	2026	Not Started
	2.2	Develop mutually beneficial partnerships to help reach underserved communities within our district.			
		2.2.1	Go to community partners and talk with them about partnerships and needs	2024	In Progress
		2.2.2	Reach out to churches and groups that serve language communities	2024	Not Started
		2.2.3	Increase in-house programming done by local organizations	2024	In Progress
		2.2.4	Examine staff time devoted to working on partnerships	2025	In Progress
		2.2.5	Increase capacity for school visits and tours	2025	In Progress
		2.2.6	Increase capacity for outreach to seniors in order to expand programming at retirement homes and participate in their fairs	2025	In Progress
		2.2.7	Provide business resources for entrepreneurs with underserved communities	2025	In Progress
		2.2.8	Expand technology literacy thru outreach with apartment complexes and mobile food pantry	2025	In Progress
		2.2.9	Host joint workshops on digital literacy and technology skills	2026	In Progress



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status	
		2.2.10	Work with local technology companies and internet service providers	2026	In Progress
	2.3	Remove barriers to library usage by increasing translation capabilities across library services, collections, and locations.			
		2.3.1	Purchase translation devices for all desks and outreach and provide training for staff	2024	Complete
		2.3.2	Develop bilingual volunteer job description	2024	Complete
		2.3.3	Label language collection shelf talkers in the language of collection	2024	In Progress
		2.3.4	Make purchase suggestion easier to find and translated into other languages	2025	In Progress
		2.3.5	Look for new places to advertise jobs to bilingual community members (stores, churches,	2025	In Progress
		2.3.6	Examine website for pages frequently used by non-English speakers and translate	2025	In Progress
		2.3.4	Research and budget for Professional Translation Service of marketing materials, forms,		Not Started
	2.4	Utilize strategic planning research data to identify and fill gaps in service, especially for working families, digital users, non-English speakers, and young			
		2.4.1	Study the strategic plan feedback from the public to identify service gaps and create a report	2024	In Progress
		2.4.2	In depth interviews with individuals and write report based upon interviews	2025	In Progress



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status
Goal 3:		Adapt programs and collections to deliver relevant content that serves changing community needs by restructuring systems, dedicating resources to these activities, and engaging in ongoing dialogue between members and staff.		
	3.1	Create a system for intentional conversations with community members to ensure collections and programs continue to meet changing needs.		
		3.1.1 Define goals of conversations- what do we need to know? how do they want info?	2024	Not Started
		3.1.2 Identify groups to reach to for feedback	2024	Not Started
		3.1.3 Schedule chats for members with library staff for casual feedback	2025	In Progress
		3.1.4 Create simple feedback mechanism for member interactions (programs, outreach, desks)	2025	In Progress
		3.1.5 Hire staff or consultant to conduct user experience studies (heat mapping, data analysis, etc.)	2026	In Progress
		3.1.3 Targeted Questionnaire after specific programs to solicit feedback. Survey available in Spanish for Spanish speakers.		Not Started
	3.2	Utilize strategic planning survey data to re-evaluate programs to attract new members and increase attendance.		
		3.2.1 Review policy around no-shows and registration. (look at other libraries)	2024	Complete
		3.2.2 Review strategic plan data, library programming statistics and other libraries about programming to identify strategies	2024	In Progress
		3.2.3 Create social clubs (possibly use existing local clubs or outside volunteers)	2025	In Progress
		3.2.4 Start workshop artist-in-residence program	2025	Complete
		3.2.5 Offer more programs in Spanish	2025	In Progress
		3.2.3 Offer more programs in non-English languages	2024	In Progress
		3.2.7 100th Anniversary Celebrations (Lego Train, Mini-Golf fundraiser) to increase attendance		Complete
	3.3	Ensure programming and collections staffing structure, budget, and processes are sufficient to deliver relevant content in a timely manner.		
		3.3.1 Find way to utilize volunteers to help manage programs	2024	In Progress
		3.3.2 Investigate consolidating collection development into 1-2 full-time positions	2024	In Progress
		3.3.3 Re-evaluate newsletter cycle	2025	Not Started
		3.3.4 Investigate consolidating programming into a department or team	2025	Not Started



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status
		3.3.5 Re-evaluate the programming committee and it's purpose	2026	Not Started
		3.3.6 Hire more communication staff to lighten load and handle new work, delegate some marketing requests so they can be updated in a timely manner.	2026	Not Started
		3.3.7 Added portable technology at branches (projector, HDMI cables, etc.) for ease of hosting programs.	2024	Complete
		3.3.8 Hire and train a Branch Manager at Rand with programming and collections responsibilities that meet branch needs	2024	Complete
	3.4	Increase and improve access to world language collections for non-English speakers in our district.		
		3.4.1 Provide training and update procedures for world language collection development for	2024	In Progress
		3.4.2 Proactively seek world language recommendations from community; create a mechanism	2024	In Progress
		3.4.3 Promote world language in marketing (special webpage, newsletter)	2024	Not Started
		3.4.4 Use vendor lists and outsource collection development	2025	In Progress
		3.4.5 Increase world language budget - tie to turnover rate	2025	In Progress
		3.4.6 Move collections to more visible location	2025	In Progress
		3.4.7 Send collection development staff to Guadalajara book fair	2025	Not Started
		3.4.8 Use census data to determine if languages need to be added	2026	Not Started
		3.4.9 Add Japanese Collection (youth picture and adult fic/nf) to North Hoffman Branch	2024	Complete
		3.4.10 Add Ukrainian youth collection to Rand Road Branch	2024	Complete
		3.4.11 Refresh Youth Spanish Non-fiction Collection at Rand Road Branch	2024	Complete
		3.4.12 Move Youth World Collection at Main to more prominent location	2024	Complete
		3.4.13 Add roku with world language channels		Complete
		3.4.14 Investigate and add more/different World Language Magazines		Complete
	3.5	Ensure Workshop Lab materials are accessible to all members.		
		3.5.1 Investigate adding more staff to increase workshop hours	2024	In Progress
		3.5.2 Provide instructions for workshop equipment in multiple languages, including video tutorials	2024	Not Started
		3.5.3 Study and identify when people want to come into the workshop for drop-in, 1:1s, and programs and schedule as possible	2024	Not Started
		3.5.4 Connect Library of Things (LOT) items to workshop equipment (flyers in LOT for workshop, signage flyers in workshop for LOT, reconsider LOT collection if we get more staff to manage it)	2025	In Progress
		3.5.5 More workshop outreach - what travels well, visit Rand Road Branch more, equipment dedicated to outreach	2025	In Progress



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status	
		3.5.4	Part-time staff member moved to full-time in Workshop	2024	Complete
		3.5.5	Maker in Residence series of programs in Summer 2024 to increase attendance and showcase Workshop		Complete
		3.5.8	Market materials for the workshop in the collection (Dewey 700s)		Not Started
		3.5.7	Better labeling of workshop equipment		In Progress
	3.6	Invest in new books and media to ensure our physical collections remain current and meet the needs of our community.			
		3.6.1	Identify peer libraries to compare collections	2024	In Progress
		3.6.2	Evaluate current collection size. Do some collections need to increase or decrease?	2024	In Progress
		3.6.3	Increase digital budget in order to reduce hold ratios	2024	Complete
		3.6.4	Develop merchandising guidelines for collection	2025	In Progress
		3.6.5	Increase marketing of physical and digital collections	2025	In Progress
		3.6.6	Find a way to rotate collections at branches (based on data deep dive)	2025	In Progress
		3.6.7	Conduct another diversity audit	2025	Not Started
		3.6.4	Add Tonieboxes to Youth collection	2024	Complete
		3.6.5	Replace wifi hotspots with newer model	2024	Complete
		3.6.6	Add accessibility items to the Library of Things Collection		Complete



PLD Strategic Plan 2024-26

Goal	Obj	Action	Start by Year:	Status
Goal 4:		Begin to understand how the library will serve the Palatine community of the future by developing a long-term plan for existing and potential new spaces.		
	4.1	Conduct a futures exercise to identify market, demographic, usage, and library drivers of change and how they may impact the ways we serve the Palatine community 10+ years from now.		
		4.1.1 Conduct conversations with local governmental units in Decennial Comm	2024	Complete
		4.1.2 Conduct conversations with social service agencies	2025	In Progress
	4.2	Assess the suitability of spaces within the community and potential partnerships to expand services beyond current library branches.		
		4.2.1 Work with architect on space needs assessment for all facilities	2026	Not Started
		4.2.2 Conduct research on branch libraries		Complete
		4.2.3 Evaluate branch leases		Complete
	4.3	Develop a long-term space plan to ensure PLD continues to serve all parts of our community effectively, efficiently, and conveniently.		
		4.3.1 Hire consultant to do a geographic study of where we should be providing services	2025	not Started

Outreach Process

Event Selection

- The events we attend depend on a number of factors, like the event's geographical location, projected attendance, and purpose.
- Decisions about which events to prioritize are determined by the communications manager, community engagement coordinator, assistant director, and executive director.

Before the Event

- Upcoming outreach events are advertised in the staff newsletter.
- Speak with your supervisor if you're interested in working an event.
- Email Beth at bsousa@palatinelibrary.org with the name of the event you would like to work and which shift, if applicable.
- Logistical information about the day of (parking, what to wear, etc.) will be emailed to you at least one day before the event, depending on when the organizer reaches out to Beth.
- Beth will arrange delivery of the outreach cart with you.

During the Event

- Set up the table with materials in the cart.
- Use the clicker to count the number of interactions. Every person counts!
- Take note of any comments made about the Library by members for the post-event survey.

After the Event

- Bring back the cart of tabling supplies to the Library as soon as possible. Deliver the materials to Maridsa in Communications unless previously directed otherwise.
- You will receive an email from Beth with a link to a post-event survey. This survey asks for the attendance count and your opinion on how the event went and what improvements can be made.
- Your name will be added to the Outreach Incentive Raffle. Names are drawn on Staff Development Days.

Questions? Reach out to Beth at bsousa@palatinelibrary.org, x154, or office 303.



OUTREACH RECAP

2024 REPORT

Prepared by: Beth Sousa





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New Procedures

Pre-Event Emails

To improve overall communication throughout the outreach process, I created a pre-event email template to send out to all staff and volunteers who would represent the Library at an upcoming event. This email comes with logistical details on the event, parking, weather (for outdoor events), what to wear, and what to highlight when speaking with community members.

Staff Training

In order to expand our outreach efforts efficiently, a comprehensive training for all staff was needed. I facilitated this training at September's Staff Development Day. It included a review of the outreach event selection process, pre-event procedures, and a role-play demonstration of several potential scenarios that can occur when representing the Library out in the community. I created an additional training document for staff who were not in attendance and new hires.

Feedback Forms

After staff and volunteers attend an event, I would send them an event feedback form that includes questions about event attendance, how the event went, and what improvements could be made to the outreach process. I created this form as a formal way of collecting event attendance numbers and insights from staff on the event. The Communications Department and I have implemented changes based on feedback I collected in this form, including reviewing giveaway options.

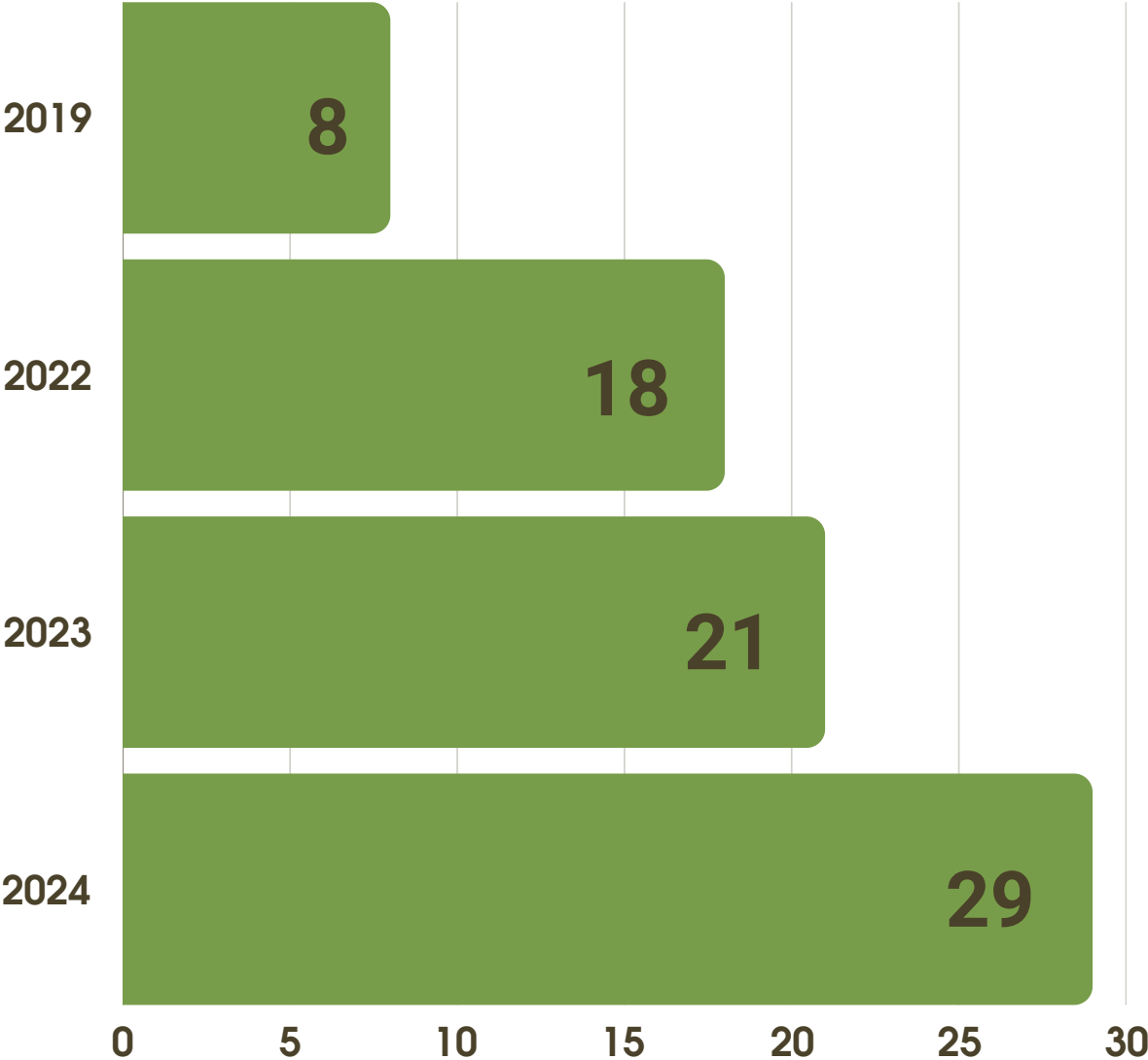
Outreach Raffle

The outreach raffle was introduced as a way to incentivize staff to represent the Library at community events. Staff names are entered for every event they attend. Raffle winners are pulled at each Staff Development Day. Currently, prizes offered are gift cards.

Over the Years

Total Events

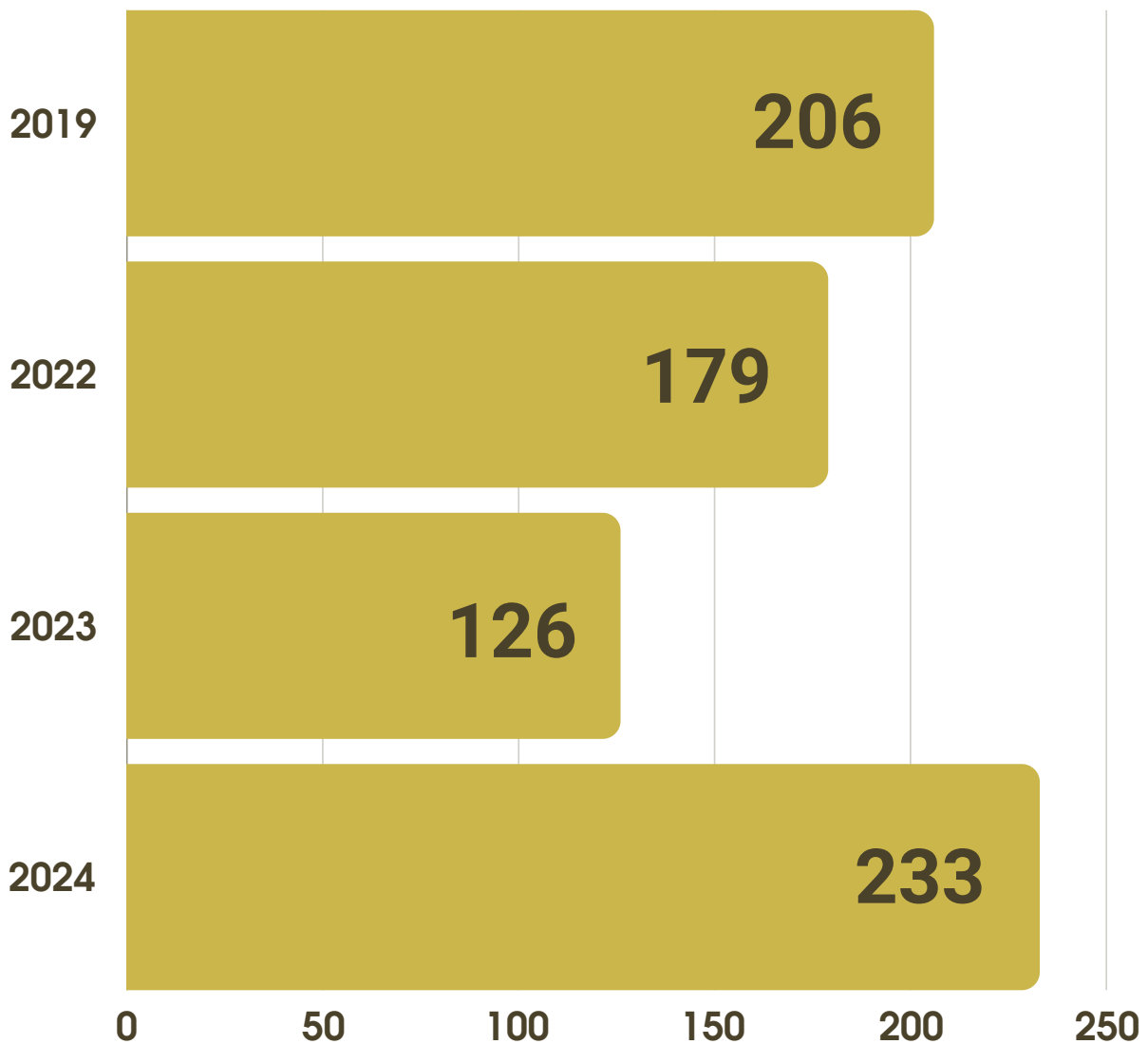
We have significantly increased the amount of outreach events we attend the past several years. Many of the events we attend are held by community organizations we work with, including Harper College, Partners for Our Community, Palatine and Salt Creek park districts, and more.



Over the Years

Staff Hours

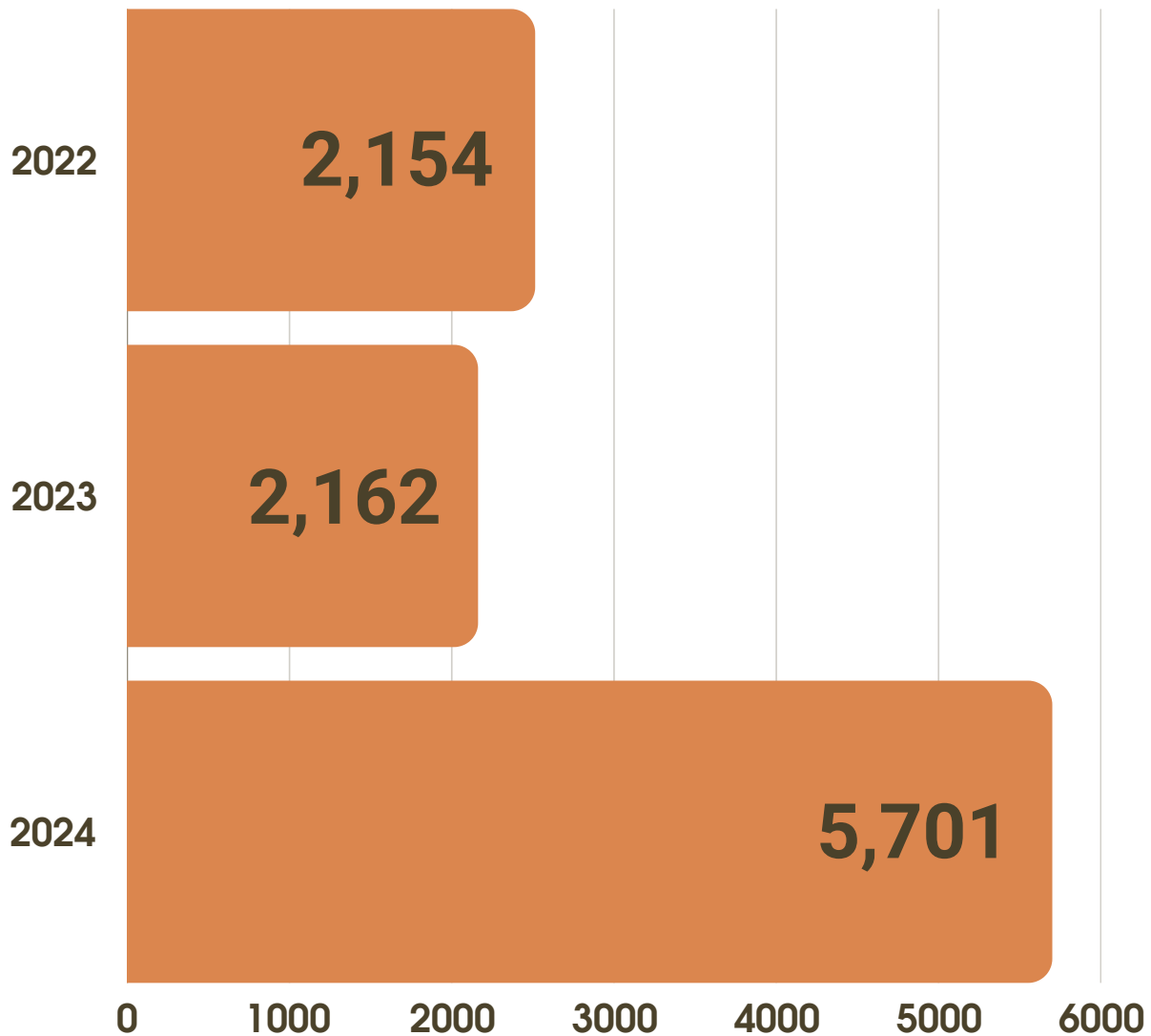
There has been an increase in staff hours over the last year at outreach events. This could be explained by the increase of events we have attended, as well as having additional staff members at events. For example, in 2023 seven staff members worked the St. Patrick's Day Parade, and that number jumped to 13 in 2024.



Over the Years

Interactions

We have significantly increased the amount of interactions with community members at outreach events this past year. Interactions are counted as any time a staff member interacts with a person at an event. Reasons for the large difference between 2023 and 2024 could be from inconsistent tracking from previous years, an increase in events this year, or a number of other factors.



Community Feedback

Melissa had the idea to add a section to the feedback form that asked if any community members had comments for the Library at outreach events. These events are a vital way for us to hear directly from members who may not wish to fill out a comment card. Below are some highlighted comments from community members at outreach events this year:

- “We had several community members tell us how much they appreciated the library.”
- “For NHB- the community is surprised we are in the WRC building.”
- “We had a gentleman compliment the renovations.”
- “Most Palatine residents that we spoke to seemed aware of the existence of the Rand branch, but some didn't seem to know that it was there.”
- “I talked to a few people that said they've been to PPLD and they really loved it. All positive comments from the public.”
- “Some non-Palatine residents didn't seem to know that they could apply as reciprocal borrowers at PPLD.”
- “Several of the families mentioned that they utilize the library now.”
- “Kanopy is awesome!”
- “Many members, mostly families with young children, told us that they love the library!”
- “Most people loved the library. Some told us how much they appreciated all of our work. Some weren't aware of the book sales and were pleased to hear about them.”

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026

As we move forward with outreach efforts in 2025, it is crucial to remain aligned with our strategic plan in order to ensure sustainable growth and that community needs are being met.

Goal 2: Increase visibility and remove barriers to participation for all members of our diverse community through meaningful engagement, increased partnerships, and targeted communications.

Goal 3: Adapt programs and collections to deliver relevant content that serves changing community needs by restructuring systems, dedicating resources to these activities, and engaging in ongoing dialogue between members and staff.



2.2.6

Increase capacity for outreach to seniors in order to expand programming at retirement homes and participate in their fairs.



2.2.8

Expand technology literacy through outreach with apartment complexes and mobile food pantry.



3.5.5

More workshop outreach - what travels well, visit Rand Road Branch more, equipment dedicated to outreach.

UPCOMING EVENTS

EMAIL EVENT DETAILS TO LIFESTYLES1@JOURNAL-TOPICS.INFO
OR USE THE "SUBMIT YOUR NEWS" FORM AT JOURNAL-TOPICS.COM

The following family-friendly events are hosted by park districts, libraries, and history centers in the Journal & Topics coverage area. Register when requested. Email event details to lifestyles1@journal-topics.info.

DES PLAINES

Des Plaines Public Library
2025 Best of the Best Art Exhibition - Dist. 62 & Maine West
Starts Thursday, Jan. 9 thru Jan. 28
See an exhibition of art by students of Des Plaines Elementary Dist. 62 and Maine West High School, selected Best of the Best, on display in the meeting room hallway.

ROSEMONT

Rosemont Park District
Valentine Sweet Treats Class
3:15 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 12
Dunne Park gymnasium, 9499 Glenlake St., Rosemont
Registration is underway for this event for ages 2 and up.

NILES

Niles-Maine District Library
Virtual - An Evening with Michelle Buteau
7 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 23
Spend an evening with actress, comedian, and author Michelle Buteau. Register.

MOUNT PROSPECT

Mount Prospect Public Library
Friends Book Sale
10 S. Emerson St.
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18
11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19
Purchase books at bargain prices during the Friends of the Library's used book sale.

PARK RIDGE

Park Ridge Park District
Teen Trip: Tubing at Villa Olivia
4 to 8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20
Enjoy snow tubing, followed by hot cocoa. Registration deadline is Tuesday, Jan. 14. Departs from Maine Park Leisure Center (2701 W. Sibley St.). Villa Olivia is located in Bartlett.

GLENVIEW

Glenview Public Library
Full STEAM Ahead with Kohl Children's Museum - grades K-2
1930 Glenview Rd., Youth Program Room
4:30 to 5:15 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20
Children can explore their inner maker through hands-on STEAM activities led by staff from the Kohl Children's Museum.

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Sunday Musicales: Andrew Carpenter

500 N. Dunton Ave., Full Hendrickson Room
2 to 3:15 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19
Andrew Carpenter, along with pianist Sharon Peterson, will present a recital of music from five continents. The program includes works of George Gershwin, Percy Grainger, Ned Rorem, and Astor Piazzola. Register.

ELK GROVE VILLAGE

Elk Grove Park District
Preschool Community Open House
Al Hattendorf Center
225 E. Elk Grove Blvd.
4:30 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 18
Spend the evening meeting with teachers, learning about the curriculum, touring the school and having your questions answered.

PALATINE

Palatine Library District
Monday Evening Book Group
700 N. North Ct., Meeting Room 2
7 to 8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20
The group will discuss "Beyond That, the Sea" by Laura Spence-Ash. A young girl is sent from London to live in America during World War II and fits in so seamlessly with her new family that she is hesitant to return to post-war England when she is called home.

WHEELING

Wheeling Park District
Grand Victoria Casino Trip - ages 55+
Meet at the Community Recreation Center
100 Community Blvd.
9:15 to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 28
Enjoy the day with friends at the Elgin Grand Victoria. Lunch is not included in the price of the trip. Register. There is a fee.

PROSPECT HEIGHTS

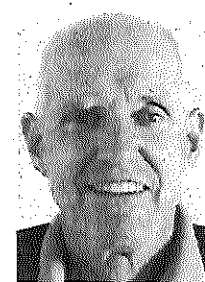
Prospect Heights Public Library District
Discover: Constellations! - for 3d to 7th graders
12 Elm St., Youth Program Room
6 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 16
Learn about the stars through stories and pictures and take a couple of them home with you.

ROLLING MEADOWS

Rolling Meadows Park District
Preschool Carnival
Community Center
3705 Pheasant Dr.
6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 16
An event for preschool-aged children and their parents. It features a variety of age-appropriate activities, including mini-games, face painting and prizes. This is a free, drop-in event.

BUFFALO GROVE

Theater for Young Audiences - Wendy & DB
Community Arts Center
225 McHenry Rd.
10:30 to 11:15 a.m. April 4



Anything & Everything

By Jon Cohn

Will January's Workout Warriors Stand The Test Of Time?

It happens every year in January. Fitness clubs across America -- or at least across our Journal & Topics coverage area will be packed and buzzing with activity. New faces suddenly appear sweating away on the weight machines and the treadmills of our local gyms.

Many of these "newbies" are starting the new year with a fresh and invigorating outlook on improving their health and fitness. A wonderful goal and a worthy resolution no doubt.

This new "commitment to excellence" is understandable. The evils of the holiday season, usually involving too much to drink, too much to eat and maybe even too much time watching the "what's the name of this bowl again?" college football on TV. All of the above and more inspiring these new workout warriors to start this new year off in a better way.

Who knows, maybe the routine change was inspired by a nagging spouse, or a gym gift certificate given to you by your secret Santa, or better yet just some of your own personal introspection -- realizing that now is as good of time as ever to start this new commitment to better health.

So, to all of you and wherever you may be starting at, whether Sky Fitness Club in Buffalo Grove, or Pinko Gym in Des Plaines, or Anytime Fitness in Arlington Heights, or LA Fitness in Niles, or CT Fitness Club in Rolling Meadows, or any one of the huge park district fitness centers like Prairie Lakes in Des Plaines or Park Center in Glenview -- wherever you may be at my message to you is this: "Are you going to be there in April?"

Meaning, and I put this as gently as I can, is this just a temporary surge of adrenaline? Or, (strategic pause) will this "commitment to fitness" really last. The sad reality is, often it is the former that is true, not the latter.

Records and statistics show that more than 50% (actually close to 75%) of those that show up at fitness centers for their first time in January, don't last thru the first four months.

Kind of sad to contemplate, but maybe best to look at it as a personal challenge. Can you be the one who defies the odds and sticks to a decent fitness regime through thick or thin? (The thick usually being the snow and maybe the thin being our skin as it meets the freezing cold temperatures of January and February).

When it is dark, cold and/or snowing outside the motivation to get dressed, get in the car and head out to the gym to say the least, is less than desirable. Add to that our already busy schedules that leave little time for other activities, and you see the challenges of regular visits to the gym.

Having said all that, though, the benefits are huge, sometimes even life changing.

Those that can find a way to fit in regular workouts into their life routines are unquestionably happier and healthier. "Happy body, happy mind", is much more than just a cute saying. It is a stark reality.

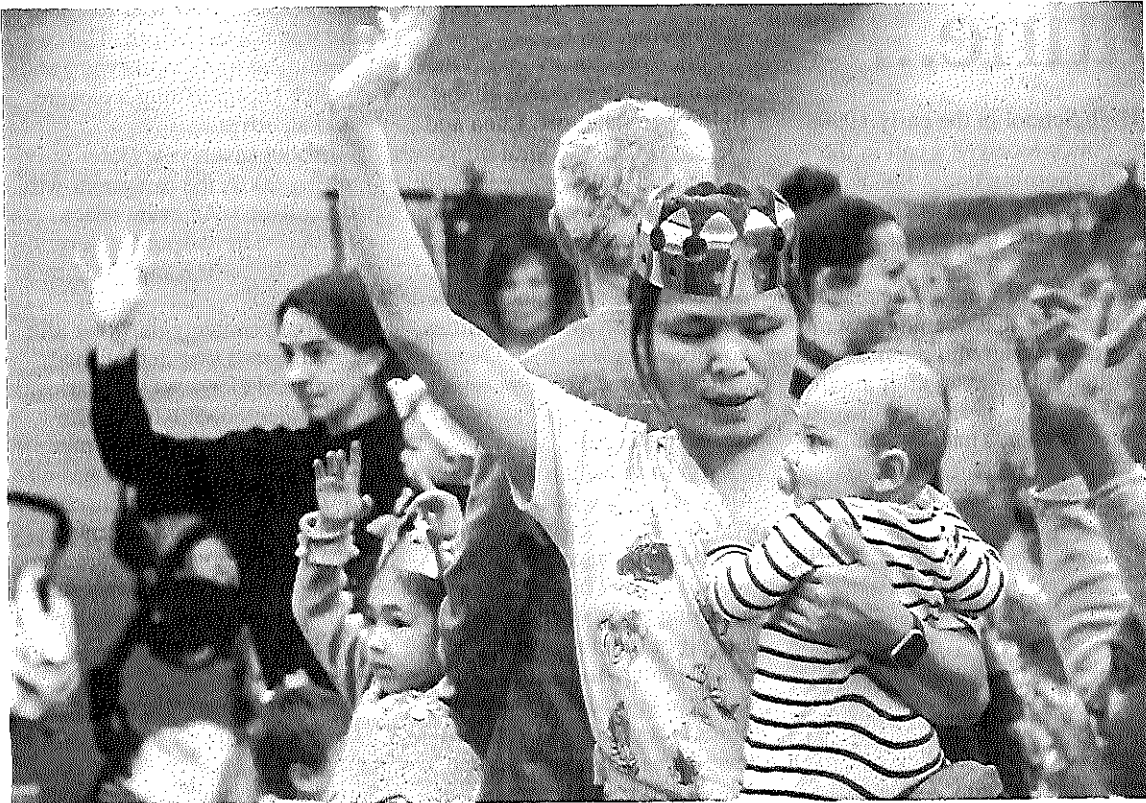
I have many times been less than enthused about going to the gym or even doing a workout at home. Sometimes the motivation is just not there. But I can only speak to my own experience and that is every time -- literally every time, no matter how I felt beforehand, after a good workout I felt better. Better mentally and definitely better physically.

So, again the message is this, and I think I can speak for most of the regulars at any one of the various gyms dotting our fine suburban area: It is nice to see you working out, and keep it up -- you're doing great.

But the real question is, will we still see you in April?

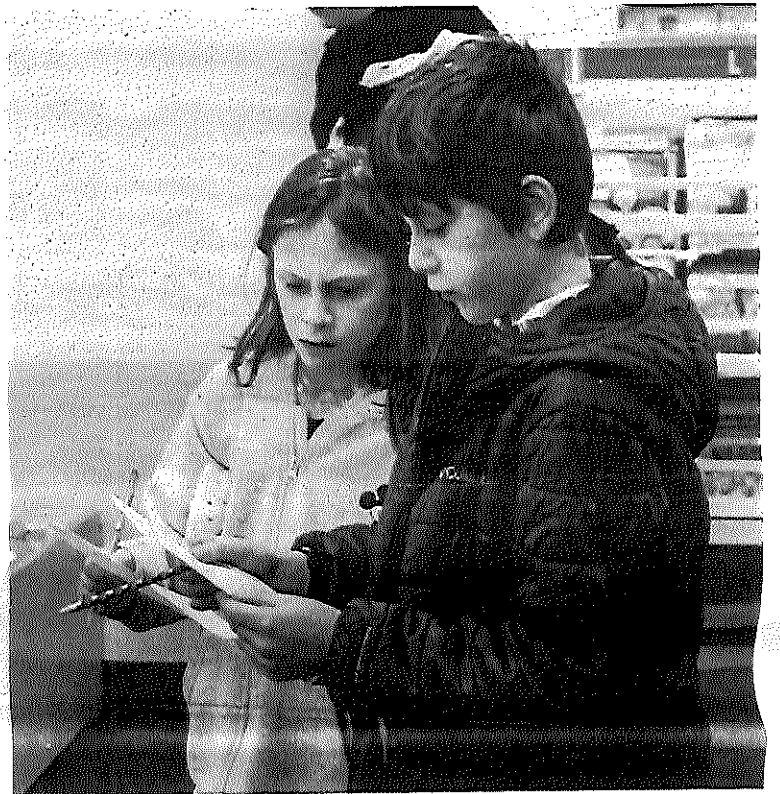
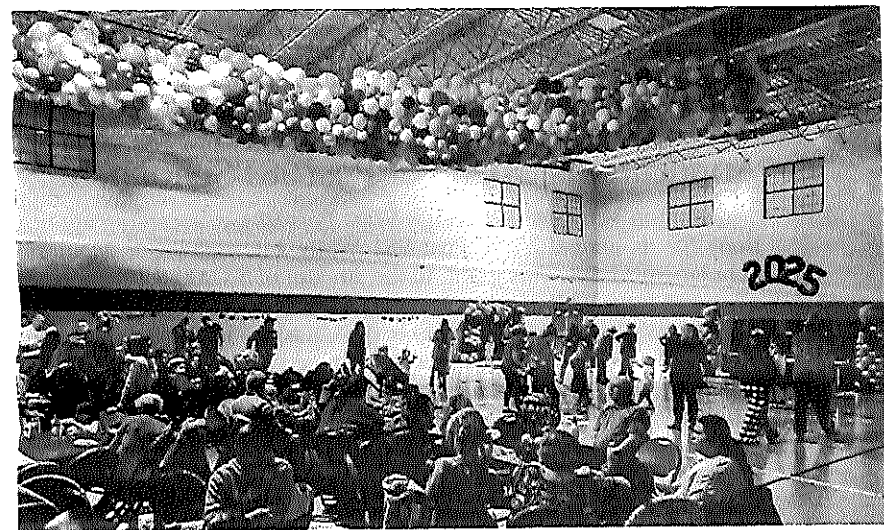
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Special Events, Celebrations Ring In 2025



Ten-month-old Emre Nicomile and nanny Hannah Yang of Buffalo Grove ring in the new year at the Vernon Area Library's New Year's Noon event Dec. 30. (Charles Miller/Special to the Journal)

Left: The balloon drop awaits New Year's eve goers in the Elk Grove Park District Pavilion gym on Dec. 31. (Tom Wessell/Journal photo)



Elena Rackow, 7, and Sam Rackow, 9, of Hoffman Estates, mark the new year with a Scavenger Hunt at the Palatine Library on Dec. 31. (Patrick Jasionowski/Special to the Journal)

Bubbles fill the air for the Vernon Library's New Year's Noon party on Dec. 30. (Charles Miller/Special to the Journal)



UPCOMING EVENTS

EMAIL EVENT DETAILS TO LIFESTYLES1@JOURNAL-TOPICS.INFO
OR USE THE "SUBMIT YOUR NEWS" FORM AT JOURNAL-TOPICS.COM

The following family-friendly events are hosted by park districts, libraries, and history centers in the Journal & Topics coverage area. Register when requested. E-mail event details to lifestyles1@journal-topics.info.

DES PLAINES

Des Plaines Theatre
Indie Music Night
1476 Miner St.
7 to 10 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 14
The cover charge is collected at the door. Seating is first-come, first-seated. Bands scheduled to perform: 7 p.m. - Heather Mall: Folk Singer and Songwriter; 7:45 p.m. - Automatic Monster: Alt Rock; 8:30 p.m. - The Unswept: Rock, and 9:15 p.m. - Woody's Revenge: Rock and Roll

ROSEMONT

Donald E. Stephens Convention Center
St. Judes Gymnastics Benefit Meet
Kids Helping Kids Fight Cancer
5555 N. River Rd.
Jan. 10-12
Hosted by the United Gymnastics Academy
For more info: <https://www.ugaillinois.com/tinley/st-jude-benefit-meet-info>

NILES

Niles-Maine District Library
MLK Day Storytime & Service Project - for families
6960 W. Oakton St., Commons Meeting Room A&B
1 to 2 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20
Celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday with stories, activities, and an optional service project: making and donating scarves. Register.

MOUNT PROSPECT

Mount Prospect Park District
Ladies Night Out - Craft at the Art Studio - ages 18+
1326 W. Central Rd.
6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 15
Enjoy a relaxing evening collaborating with other women who love crafting. Bring a friend. There is a fee. Register.

PARK RIDGE

Park Ridge Park District

The Great Family Magic Show - 3+ with adult
Centennial Activity Center
100 S. Western Ave.
11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19
Register, there is a fee.
The event includes lunch and a magic show. Remember your camera for photo opportunities. The magician starts at 11:45 a.m. Register in advance; in-person registration is not accepted. The fee is per person. The registration deadline is Jan. 12.

GLENVIEW

Glenview Public Library
Author Event: Matthew Cordell - grades K+
1930 Glenview Rd.
2 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19
Join 2018 Caldecott Medal Winner Matthew Cordell for an afternoon of family fun to celebrate his new book, "To See an Owl." Copies of the author's book will be available for purchase and signing. This event is presented in partnership with The Book Stall in Winnetka.

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Classic Chicago Cinema: The Blues Brothers
500 N. Dunton Ave., Full Hendrickson Room
6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 13
(Rated R. Run-time: 132 minutes) Two soul-singing brothers are sent on a "mission from God" to raise \$5,000 to save a Chicago orphanage. On their fundraising tour, they encounter numerous mishaps and mayhem. No library card is required.

ELK GROVE VILLAGE

Elk Grove Park District
Sweetheart Dance - for families
Pavilion
1000 Wellington Ave.
6 to 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7
Get dressed to impress and attend the Sweetheart Date Night Dance. Attire is semi-formal. Register.

PALATINE

Palatine Library District

Virtual - Exploring ChatGPTs Created for Genealogy
7 to 8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 13
Learn how to find and use Chat GPT tools created to help improve your genealogy experience. Sign-up begins Monday, Dec. 30. Presented via Zoom.

WHEELING

Wheeling Park District
Paint and Sip, 21+
Chevy Chase Country Club
1000 N. Milwaukee Ave.
5:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30
Fee with and without alcoholic beverages
Register for a relaxing painting session while having a great time with friends. Wine, seltzer, and charcuterie are included.

PROSPECT HEIGHTS

Prospect Heights Public Library
Thomas Lowery Group Jazz Concert - adults
12 Elm St., near windows
2 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 12
The trio will perform standards and favorites from the Great American Songbook.

ROLLING MEADOWS

Rolling Meadows Library
Breakfast Club - 50+
Community Center Laurel Room
3705 Pheasant Dr.
9:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 16
The park district will be catering from the Baker Patisserie in Arlington Heights.

BUFFALO GROVE

Buffalo Grove Environmental Action Team Reception
Raupp Museum
901 Dunham Ln.
6 to 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 10
Those interested in becoming a member of the Buffalo Grove Environmental Action Team (BGEAT), are invited to a reception at the Raupp Museum to learn about the team from the team members and to view the BGEAT exhibit. RSVP to Martha Weiss (weiss.martha@gmail.com) if you plan on attending.

Des Plaines Resident's Design Among Finalists For New Illinois Flag

By IGOR STUDENKOV
Journal & Topics Reporter

People from all over Illinois submitted over 5,000 designs for a new state flag - and a design by a Des Plaines resident ended up as one of the 10 finalists.

The Office of Secretary of State didn't release the names and other identifying information for most finalists, but the submitted bio mentioned that they lived in Illinois for their entire life. The 40-year-old finalist grew up in Naperville, then moved to Chicago for 18 years before moving to Des Plaines.

The flag features a dark blue silhouette of Illinois in a white circle surrounded by 21 white stars. The stars that represent Illinois' status as the 21st state admitted into the union, is something of a recurring motif among the finalists. The rest of the flag is mostly the same shade of dark blue as the silhouette of the state, except for vertical stripes on the right and left edges. According to the design descriptions, the light blue stripes represent the waters of the Mississippi River, which forms the state's western border, and the waters of Lake Michigan.

According to the design description, the designer chose the silhouette because they "always felt Illinois had a distinct outline."

"Additionally, I used the circular design to symbolize Illinois being a kind of center of the country, whether it is geographically or from Chicago serving as a hub for train and air traffic," the description states.

While Illinois became a state in 1818, it didn't have the official flag until 1915. The flag design came out of a contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution, a simple design featuring a state seal against the white background won. Since then, the flag has only seen minor changes.

In 2023, State Sen. Doris Turner (D-48th) and State Rep. Kam Buckner (D-26th) sponsored a bill to establish a flag commission to look at whether the flag should be replaced with a new design, and if so, what the new design would be. The recommendations the commission makes aren't binding - it will be up to the Illinois General Assembly to decide whether the state will follow its recommendation.

The 10 finalists were selected on Dec. 10. In January, Illinois residents will be able to vote for either of those designs. They will also have an option of voting to keep the current design, or to have the state Centennial Flag or the state Sesquicentennial Flag. Notably, both anniversary flags used the similar shade of dark blue as the Des Plaines design.

In a recorded statement, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias encouraged residents to vote for something, even if it's to preserve the status quo. "While the members of the flag commission have selected their Top 10, you'll now have an opportunity to vote for your favorite as well," he said. "If you don't like the new design, you can vote to keep the current flag or choose from the two historical ones."

The Flag Commission is expected to submit its recommendations to the General Assembly by April 1, 2025.

"I used the circular design to symbolize Illinois being a kind of center of the country, whether it is geographically or from Chicago serving as a hub for train and air traffic."



State flag design by Des Plaines resident that's one of 10 recently selected as finalist.