



STARK  LIBRARY

2022

2022 was an amazing year at the Library! We re-connected with many Library patrons as the world emerged from a global pandemic. We continued our Re|imagine project, with three more branches welcoming patrons into new, inviting spaces, and began work on a Master Plan to move forward with building a new Main Library on our downtown campus. It is certainly an exciting time here at the Library!

A Library is not just books. It is not just a building. It is people connecting people to the information and resources they need. We could not do what we do without the commitment and hard work of our staff and the support of our Board of Trustees. I am truly grateful for our many volunteers who support the Library by being part of the Friends of the Library and the Stark Library Foundation. I am proud to serve alongside these talented, dedicated individuals.

Most importantly, though, everything we do at the Library is for you—our patrons and friends. This is **your** Library, and we appreciate your support and patronage.

We are stronger together.

Mary Ellen Icaza
Mary Ellen Icaza
CEO/Executive Director



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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OUR MISSION

We strengthen the community by advancing literacy, connecting people, and encouraging exploration.

OUR VISION

A thriving, literate, equitable community.

OUR VALUES

We honor our mission every day by using these values as a guide.

- **Respect**
We treat each person with dignity and cultivate civility among staff and patrons.
- **Inclusion**
We embrace diversity, invite multiple points of view, and foster an environment of belonging.
- **Stewardship**
We ensure the responsible management of our human, financial, and physical resources.
- **Progress**
We empower staff to learn, innovate, and lead as we proactively adapt to meet our community's present and future needs.

“ I am thankful I live in an area with a great library system staffed by terrific librarians. ”





Advancing Literacy

SUPPORTING LITERACY in our Community

There is no greater way the Library strengthens our community than by giving everyone the power to read and learn. From giving new parents early literacy tools for their kids through helping older adults navigate the digital world, we're passionate about elevating literacy throughout Stark County.

First Lady Fran DeWine has made literacy a priority in Ohio. She helped us celebrate reaching our enrollment goal for the Stark County Imagination Library by visiting our Perry Sippo Branch and reading stories to eager little ones.



A caring librarian made all the difference when young Rion was struggling to read. **By really getting to know her**, she customized a book list to spark her interest! Now, the girl who wouldn't read loves having a book in her hands!



A HUGE MILESTONE for the Stark County Imagination Library

More than 50% of the children eligible for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Stark County are now enrolled! A victory for early literacy! Regardless of income, a child receives a free, age-appropriate book every month in the mail from birth until the age of five. We know that the more a child reads and interacts with books, the greater their chances for success. We are proud to bring this program to our community.

We expanded our reach for the Imagination Library by partnering with Aultman and Cleveland Clinic Mercy Hospitals. Parents can enroll their newborns (our tiniest citizens) in the Imagination Library and get their very first book on the day they're born.

A grandmother thanked us for helping her granddaughter flex her early reading muscles. She said the new book each month "is helpful as she is working toward her 1000 Books Before Kindergarten goal. She is currently at 700!"



TRAIL TALES ▲

Who says reading requires sitting indoors? Kids run, walk, and skip through a new book and activities each month at our new permanent story walk—Trail Tales at Sippo Lake Park. The project is a partnership with Stark Parks, funded with an American Rescue Plan Act grant from the State Library of Ohio.

Advancing Literacy *in the Summer*

SUMMER FUN SCHOOL

Our award-winning Summer Fun School is a vehicle to success for kids at high risk of learning loss in Canton. By taking learning kits and food into underserved neighborhoods on bookmobiles, entire families play and learn together. We were awarded two grants to help even more kids in the summer of 2023.



BUILDING EQUITY BASED SUMMERS

The Library was chosen by the State Library of Ohio as one of five libraries to be a part of the Ohio Building Equity Based Summers (BEBS) cohort! This program will empower Library staff to weave equity into their summer library programs.

“One dad at our Skyline stop reported that his kids loved the dinosaur kits, *They made a mess, but it was so much fun!*”

MEALS **Children's Hunger Alliance:** 1,622 **Backpack for Kids:** 2,241

SUMMER FUN SCHOOL

People served: 5,531

Neighborhoods visited: 28

Activity Kits distributed: 7,202

STOPPING THE SUMMER SLIDE

When school lets out, we step in to stop the summer slide in skills and overcome pandemic learning loss with our Summer Break program. Participation grew by more than 25% in 2022. Combining play with learning, reading, and prizes is a winning combination.



FEEDING HUNGRY KIDS

It's hard to learn when you're hungry. With no school meals in the summer, the Library partnered with the Stark County Hunger Task Force and the Children's Hunger Alliance, distributing meals to children and families in need.

“A boy at our Madge Youtz Branch was thrilled to win one of our Summer Break grand prizes—a bike. He fulfilled his dream of being able to ride with his friend by giving him his old wheels. A heart-warming story of learning and giving!”



SUMMER BREAK

Participants: 4,220

Days Read: 43,200

Activities logged: 3,100

Connecting People Service

Directly helping and serving people is one of the greatest joys of Library work. We connect with patrons, and they connect with each other through many activities and programs. The closeness spreads to impact the community at-large.

◀ Our bookmobile staff couldn't help connecting with Gibby the Bassett Hound, who approached them at their stop on a busy street. Our friendly staff gave him a ride to the animal warden—the first ever to arrive there on a bookmobile! He was reunited with his family, who now has one more reason to love their neighborhood Bookmobile!

We have needle work clubs at almost every location. The Main Library club has become a tight knit group, needling each other on, in a good way! These crafters shared love and warmth by creating blankets to give to nursing home residents.



Carol does all her banking online. She got a new device and was unsure how to install her banking app. She was grateful that we were able to offer her an appointment to get her new device set-up.



BUSINESS/DOCUMENT SERVICES



We want to remove as many barriers as possible for patrons to use the Library's services. In 2022, our Board of Trustees passed a resolution to provide free document printing services up to \$1.50 per day. Patrons can even upload documents from home to print and pick up at the Library.

1:1 SERVICES



Personalized service isn't part of a bygone era for us. We help people to learn to use their smartphones, find jobs, notarize documents, customize book selections, research, get a passport, and so much more!

“ One man was so impressed with the free service that he asked how much it would cost to join the Library. When we explained that it was free, he said, *'That is too good a deal to pass up! Sign me up for a Library card!'* ”

Delivering Books *and Hope*

Connecting people unable to leave home with Library books and resources provides more than a novel or DVD. For many, we ease isolation and show them someone still cares. Hope is part of each delivery.



◀ DEVOTED STAFF

Roseann enjoys getting to know nearly 200 people who can't come to the Library, including three over the age of 100. She talks to them on the phone jotting down their likes and dislikes on a huge stack of notecards, so she can send books they're sure to enjoy!

MAGICAL BOOKMOBILES ▶

Cindy connects kids to a world of imagination, spreading invisible "magic dust" onboard the bookmobile. At festivals, adults often tell us their memories of the magic dust, which helped them listen during storytimes, and other fun programs. Wherever we stop—neighborhoods, schools, day cares, nursing homes, the correctional center—there is joy in connecting people with books and DVDs to learn, inspire, and entertain.

GOLDEN GEAR KITS

Many older adults bonded with their kids, grandkids, and friends with our Golden Gear kits, which include items like exercise equipment, nostalgia, DVDs, CDs, activities, and books. These kits encourage reminiscing, exercising, gardening, and connecting with family.



Encouraging Exploration

Exploring is a joy, especially when you get free passes to many local venues from the Library! Last year, we distributed free culture passes to the Canton Museum of Art, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the McKinley Presidential Library and Museum, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame.



The kids were instantly fascinated with dinosaur and fossil exhibits at the McKinley Museum. We really enjoyed our experience. Thank you for making this experience possible.

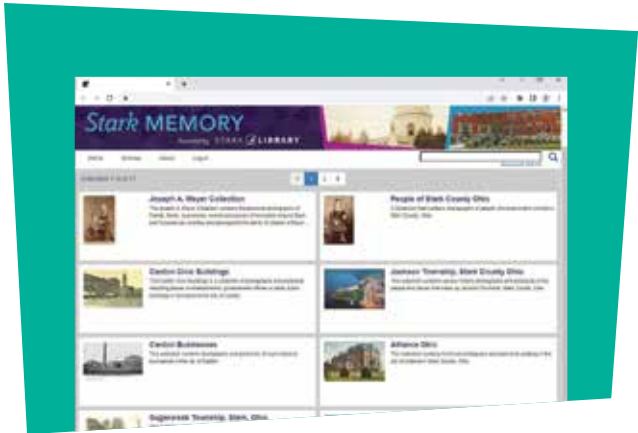
—a grateful family of four



UNCOVERING THE PAST

We expanded our genealogy resources to discover and preserve family roots and local history!

Stephanie Houck, Genealogy and Special Collections Manager, worked with a patron who was first generation from Sicily. She was able to use library resources, so that he could trace his family back five generations in Sicily. He was thrilled!



STARK MEMORY LAUNCH

We created a digital pathway to fascinating history with the launch of Stark Memory—an online resource where people throughout the world can find old photos and documents from Stark County. There are even digital recordings of oral histories by members of the African American Community in Canton. An amazing resource!

Encouraging Exploration

Speaking of Books

From babes in arms to older adults, the Library was bursting with programs for all ages to explore diverse interests! Our patrons and staff were happy to be in-person again.



DOUG WILLIAMS, JAMES HARRIS, & ADRIAN ALLISON



JASON REYNOLDS



JAMIE FORD

Thousands joined us to experience insights from the diverse speakers who joined us for the Dr. Audrey Lavin Speaking of Books author series. From a TV cook to pro football stars, social activists, and scientific pioneers, these best-selling authors inspired lively and, at times, challenging conversations. We heard from many patrons grateful for a chance to directly engage with these talented writers.

“I met an astronaut and guess what... she was a girl astronaut!”

—four-year-old Ruby, on meeting astronaut Nicole Stott”

Ruby’s dad, Mark Rogers, wrote us a thank you note, saying the event “turbo-charged a little girl into dreaming bigger.” We can’t wait to see her future take off!



NIGELLA LAWSON



TYLER MERRITT



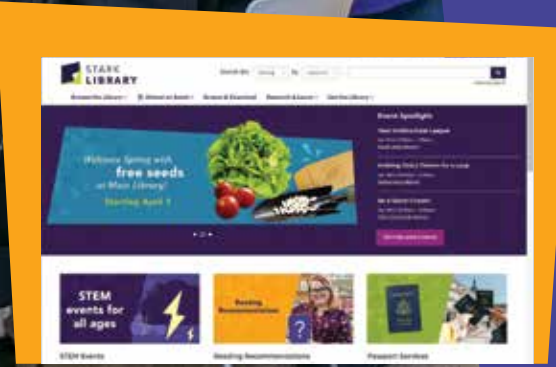
NICOLE STOTT

THE DR. AUDREY LAVIN
SPEAKING OF BOOKS AUTHOR SERIES



Bridging the Digital Divide

We all rely on the language of technology today and being technologically literate is critical to success. The Library bridges the digital divide in our community with training, tools, and resources. We provide public computers, and WiFi in all our locations. Plus, for those families and students who may not have Internet access at home, we loan equipment to help. Online and in-person classes help people of all skill levels navigate their own paths in the digital world.



OUR DIGITAL BRANCH

Much of 2022 was devoted to making our website—our digital branch—more welcoming and user-friendly. Our new catalog helps online users find books and materials quickly to borrow. The website is more intuitive to use and easier to navigate. Patrons are giving our digital branch a thumbs-up.

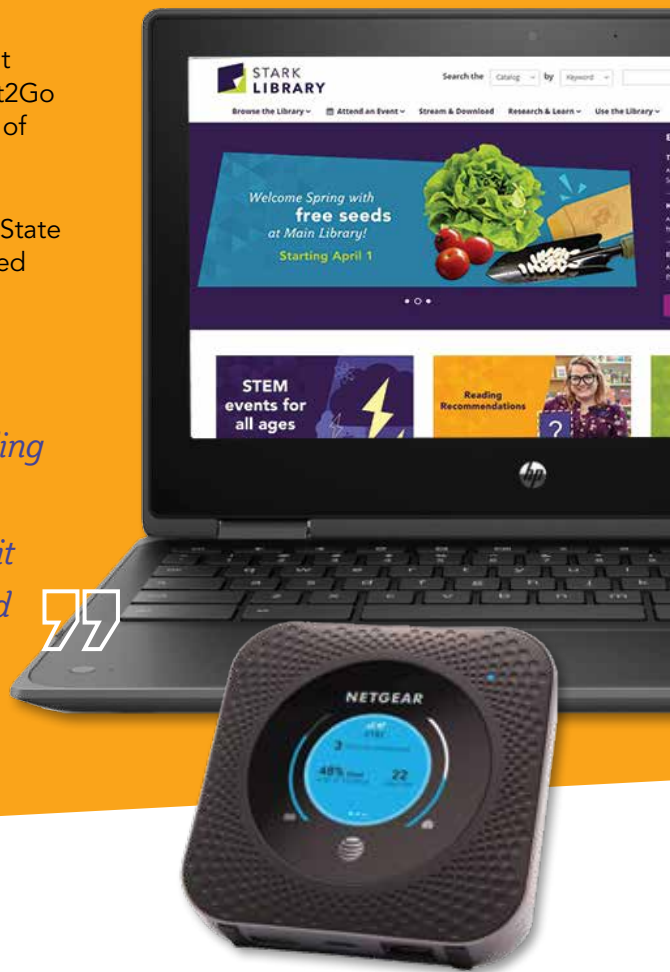
INTERNET2GO KITS

The Library successfully built a bridge for those stranded without Internet access or the necessary equipment to connect. Our Internet2Go Kits contain a Chromebook and a WiFi Hotspot, much to the relief of hundreds of patrons.

These kits were distributed to more than 165 Stark State and Kent State University at Stark students, and more than 335 patrons in high-need areas of the community.

“He was practically in tears when he told me how grateful he was... His funds were limited due to attending school, and his phone had recently been shut off because he could not pay the bill. The ConnectED Kit gave him the opportunity to stay connected so he could get his schoolwork done.”

—a staff member



One patron was so thankful for this service because she needed the Internet at home to be able to hunt for a new job to get back on her feet.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It is our goal that every person in Stark County feels welcome and represented when they walk into the Library. This year we worked on being very intentional with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We created several committees as well as an inclusion statement to guide our work in this area:

At Stark Library, we are committed to providing a welcoming atmosphere for all people. We recognize that each person is complex with a unique set of characteristics and identities, and we continue to build and nurture an inclusive environment that represents, supports, values, and celebrates the community we serve.

DEI COLLECTION AUDIT

As part of our ongoing systemwide efforts to embed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into all aspects of our work, for the second year we completed an audit of the diversity of our holdings. This is a unique opportunity to view our print collections exclusively through the lens of DEI categories.

We are pleased to report that our systemwide percentage of titles categorized as diverse has increased from 12% to 16% as of December 2022. This is above the public library average of 14% for inClusive customers.



The Illumination Celebration honored international cultural holidays centering around the Festivals of Light.

East Canton teachers brought their classes to the Library so students could read this message of belonging by Teen Specialist, Kim.

We celebrated and honored our diverse community by recognizing cultural heritage months throughout the year. Events and programs celebrating diversity help us understand and appreciate each other.



A mom expressed her delight with the cultural programs we offer. She was thrilled to learn more about the Native American tradition of dream catchers—and to create them with her daughters.

We find the Stark Library system to be up-to-date, friendly, and open to offering information on subjects from multiple perspectives. This is what we hope for and love about our public library.

— Elizabeth, library patron



Reimagine STARK LIBRARY

“*Our Library really belongs to the community. We want to make it a place where everyone feels comfortable and welcome.*”
—Mary Ellen Icaza

ReImagine is our commitment to invest in our community by properly caring for our buildings and facilities to serve our patrons with excellence in the 21st century. In 2022, three more branches were completed for our patrons. Our team completed each project on time and within the established budget, and we are proud of this tremendous accomplishment.

As we watched patrons enter their newly remodeled libraries with shining eyes and anticipation, we were reminded how important the Library is to the people of our community.

RE|IMAGINE 2.0

We are excited to announce the next phase in our ReImagine project—a new Main Library! On our downtown Main Library campus, we will also build an operations center to house Library support services.

In addition, we are working on a Master Plan for all our properties. As good stewards of the funds entrusted to us by the community, we knew that we needed to have an ongoing process of assessing the Library’s facilities as well as evaluating the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

“*I spoke to a patron who told me she had visited Madge Youtz and loved it! She thought it was so open and bright.*”



2020 2021



JACKSON COMMUNITY



NORTH BRANCH



EAST CANTON



MADGE YOUTZ



PERRY SIPPO



DEHOFF MEMORIAL



LAKE COMMUNITY

2022

Awards and Grants

We earned grants and awards to help us advance literacy, encourage females in STEM, provide learning opportunities, and to be equitable in serving our community.



GRANTS



H.W. Hoover Foundation
Women in STEM

This grant helped to fund Speaking of Books authors, Dylan Dreyer and Danni Washington, related science programming, and STEM learning kits.

\$44,500



Visit Canton/Arts in Stark
Cultural Tourism

These funds were used to promote the Speaking of Books author event, in partnership with the Black College Football Hall of Fame and the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

\$12,275



Women's Fund
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

To read more about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, see pages 4–5.

\$5,000

AWARDS

Our Literacy Manager Julia Shaheen was honored with the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System's 2022 Shooting Star Award. Her hard work on many early literacy projects like the Trail Tales story walk and the Summer Learning Program has been noticed!



The Summer Fun School ▶

Honorable mention in the Urban Libraries Council Innovation Awards

Ohio Department of Education
Libraries Accelerating Learning

This grant will help us expand Summer Fun School to children in even more areas and neighborhoods in Canton. We're partnering with more than a dozen local agencies in this endeavor.

\$260,950

Sisters of Charity
Summer Fun School

To read more about Summer Fun School, see page 6.

\$51,520





Visit us at any of our 10 locations and at StarkLibrary.org.