



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Don't Miss!



50/50 RAFFLE

Tickets are **\$1** each and can be purchased from **Conni Strittmatter** or **David Dahl!** The winner takes home half the pot.



PUB QUIZ

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Choptank Ballroom



SILENT AUCTION

Visit the Silent Auction in the exhibitor hall to place your bids **before 10:45 a.m. on Friday, May 8th.**



KARAOKE

Thursday, May 7
8:00 – 11:00 p.m.
Windjammer



OUR STORIES, OUR SHELVES

MLA • DLA Conference 2026

Library on the Loose!

Serving the Underserved through Mobile Library Outreach

PRESENTERS:

Nicole Worth and Ewa Wojciechowska

May 6-8, 2026 | Cambridge, MD

Who We Are



Nicole Worth
Teen Services Librarian



Ewa Wojciechowska
Youth Services Librarian

Identifying Underserved Communities

Question:

What is an Underserved community?

Who are the Underserved?



Identifying Underserved Communities

This table from a recently published research article shows the different types of underserved communities that librarians in the study worked with:

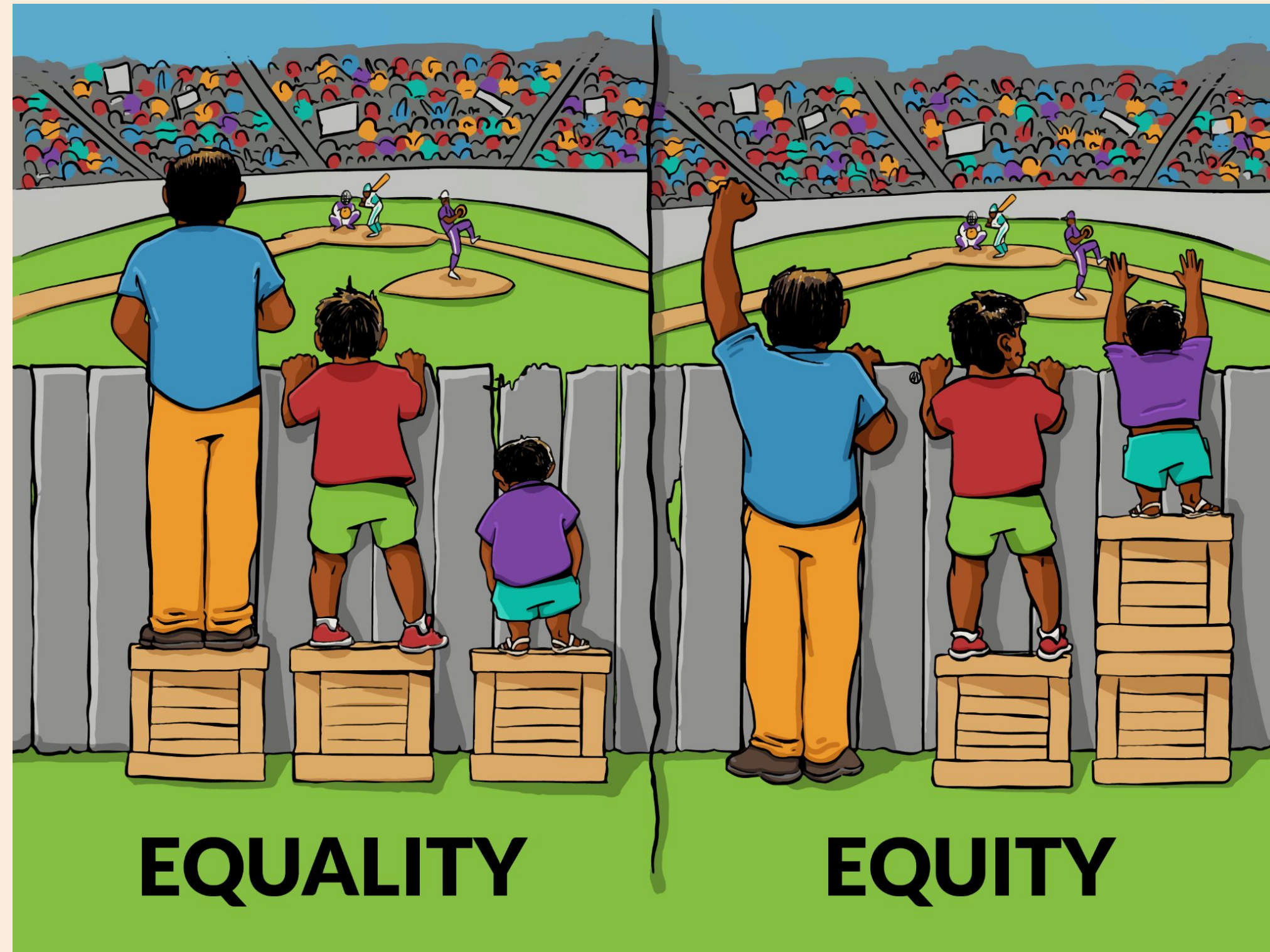
Table 4. Underserved communities that participant libraries were serving.

Underserved group being served	Percentage of participants (N = 37)
People with low socioeconomic status	65%
People lacking transportation	35%
People who are immigrants, refugees, and/or asylum seekers	27%
People from minoritized communities (Latinx, African American, Asian-Pacific Islander, etc.)	27%
Children in school districts with low rates of grade-level reading	24%
Communities that are geographically isolated	24%
People for whom English is a second language	22%
Children who attend Title 1 schools	19%
People experiencing homelessness	19%
Children with special needs	8%

Campana et al. (2022)



Equality vs Equity



Bridging the Gap through Mobile Outreach

Why are we taking library services outside our building?

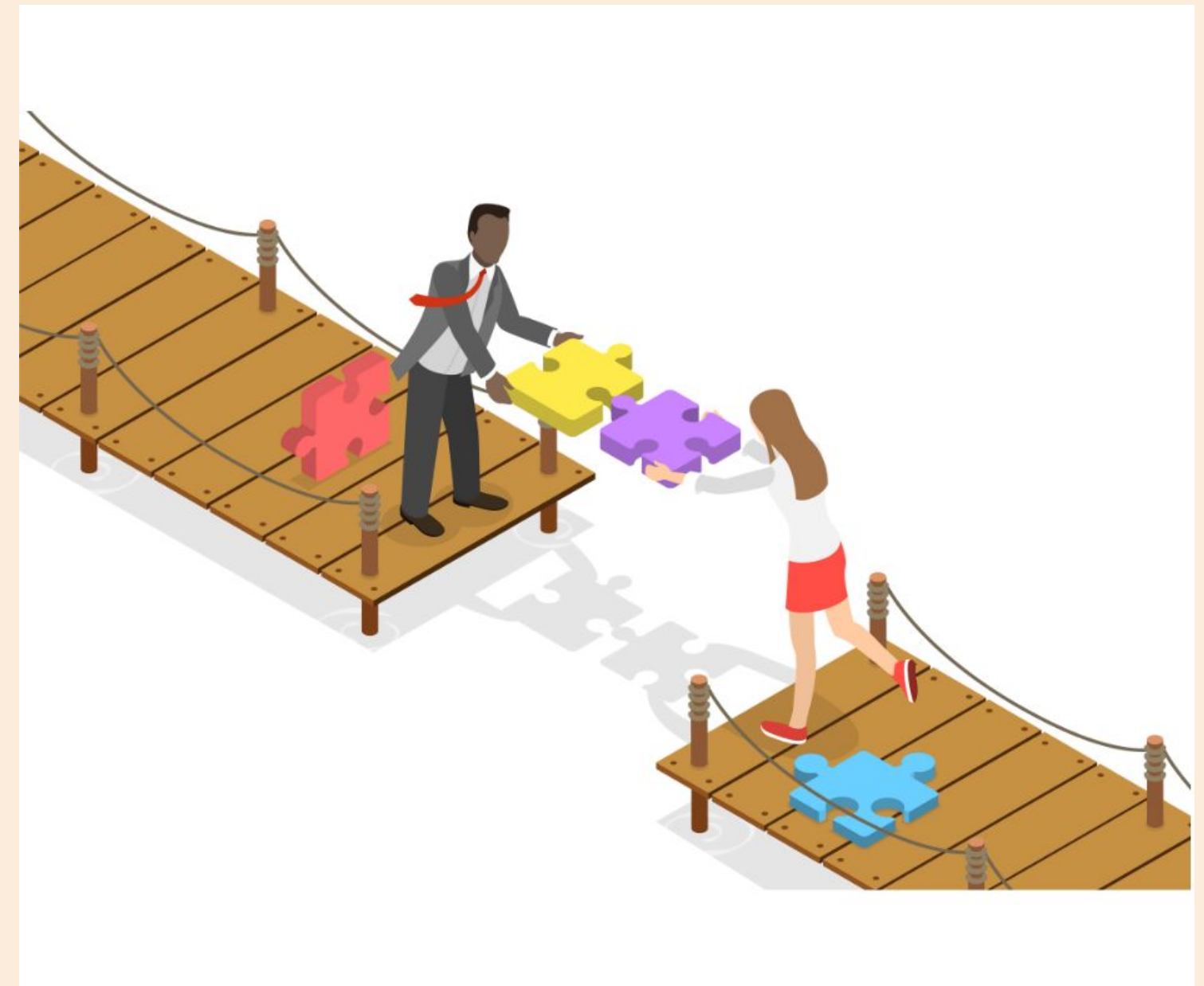
Library Use

Research has shown that families from underserved communities tend not to use library programs, services, and resources (Campana et al. 2022).

Library attendance is at 66% among children with high socioeconomic status, and only 36% among those with the lowest socioeconomic status (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2018).

Access Barriers

- Lack of transportation
- Mistrust of government agencies
- Inability to pay fines
- etc.



Where to Start

ENGAGE: Get to know your community through exploration.

Research demographics, but also: “Talk to community organizations such as churches, food banks, homeschool groups, parent advising groups, targeted focus groups, community partners, and community focus groups” (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2018).

CULTIVATE: Identify a site and collaborate with partners.

“Offering outreach programs and services often requires you to develop partnerships to help you gain access to specific community groups, locate a site where you can offer your program or service, and connect with people so that your efforts will be well received.” (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2018).



Figure 2. Model of outreach development (Campana, Mills, & Martin, 2018)

New Castle Community Overview

New Castle Underserved Student Demographics

C O L O N I A L	Calvin R. McCullough Middle School	79.66%
	Carrie Downie Elementary School	82.70%
	Castle Hills Elementary School	80.16%
	Colwyck Elementary School	67.42%
	George Read Middle School	58.58%
	Gunning Bedford Middle School	49.98%
	Harry O. Eisenberg Elementary School	93.62%
	John G. Leach	30.91%
	Kathleen H. Wilbur Elementary	47.73%
	New Castle Elementary School	79.02%
	Pleasantville Elementary School	74.22%
	Positive Change Academy	92.22%
	Southern Elementary School	60.93%
	William Penn High School	52.21%
Wilmington Manor Elementary School	63.04%	

- **Colonial School District free or reduced lunch student eligibility**
 - 67.49% Roughly 10,000 students enrolled
 - aprox. 6,800 students

- **2020 US Census Data**
 - 10,820 children ages 0 - 19 live in New Castle
 - 15.8% live in poverty
 - aprox. 1,700 children



Delaware Department of Education. 2024, February 27. *SNP-23-Area-Eligibility-Percentages-for-School-Year-24-25*.
<https://education.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SNP-23-Area-Eligibility-Percentages-for-School-Year-24-25.pdf>

Library on the Loose! 1.0

Year One Mission

Connecting with the community, and providing resources on a smaller scale.

** The mission has since expanded and became more refined.*

Year One Goals

- Building positive relationships with families in the community that might otherwise never interact with their local library
- Informing families about free library resources available to them
- Building children's home libraries
- Learning the needs of the community in order to provide more intentional services



How it Started

Ewa's Program

June - August 2024

Key Considerations

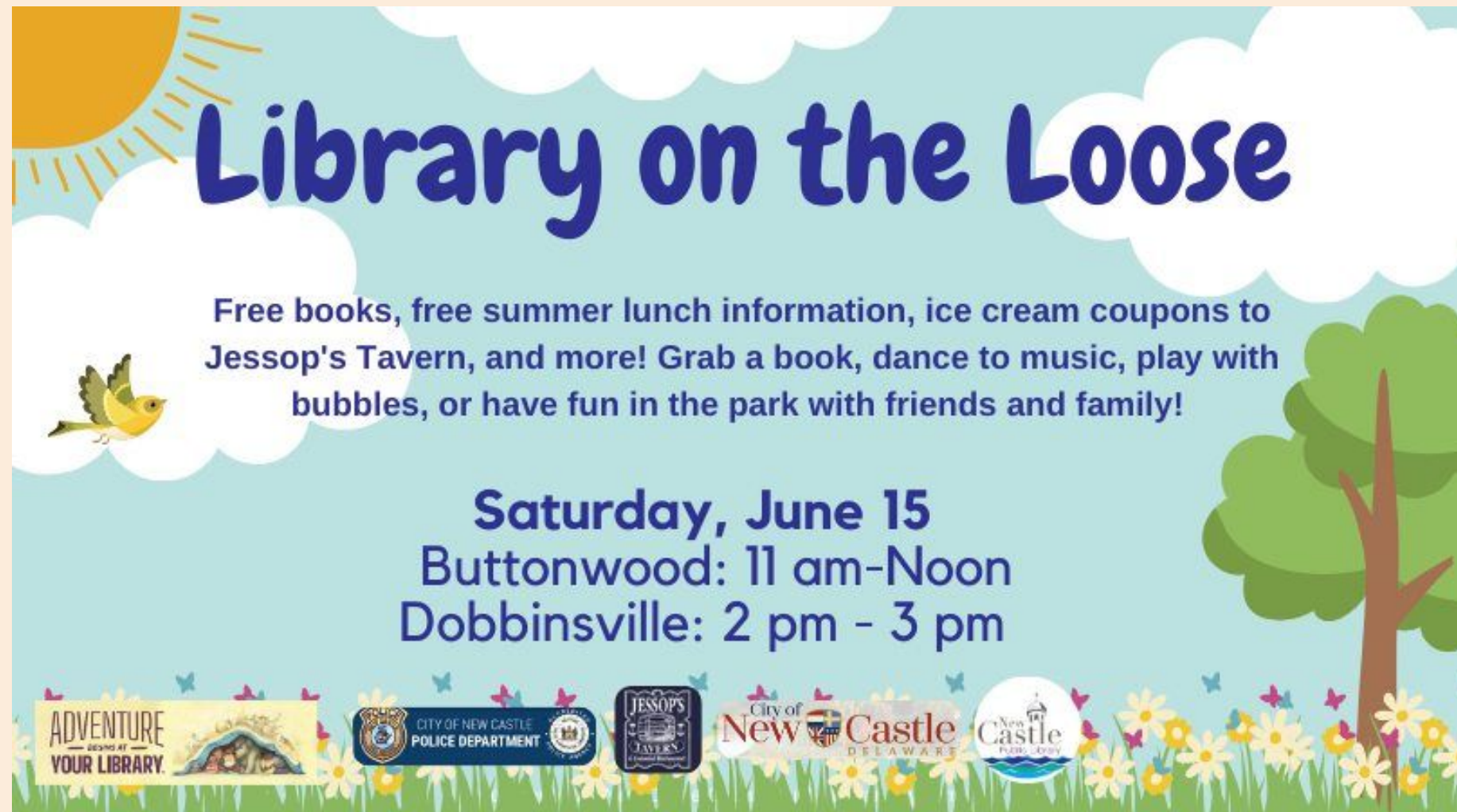
Intentional locations: two specific underserved neighborhoods in our community

- We chose **visible locations with easy access**
- Met families where they were to make it easier for them to participate
- Used the surrounding space to our advantage, allowing families to get more out of the program
 - *Playgrounds and open field space allowed children to stay and play*



How it Started

Ewa's Program



Activities we added in:

- Free books to encourage reading and build home libraries
- Ice cream coupons in partnership with a local business
- Music and bubbles to add fun for children who stayed and played
- Opportunities for children to interact with their local police and city councilperson



Nicole's Involvement: The BookBag Program

Attended ALA's LibLearnX in Baltimore in January 2024

The BookBag Program

- Attended a session called "BookBag: Bridging the Summer Gap with Books, Hygiene, Snacks, and Fun!"
- Started by Shiela McMichaels, a school librarian in Missouri
- Discussed food and hygiene insecurity for students during the summer months
- Partnered with her local public library to offer the BookBag program
 - Attendees received a free bookbag and were to stock up on books, food, and hygiene products
- Check out [The BookBag Program Facebook](#) page for updates on her program!

Light Bulb Moment

Could I partner with Ewa to build upon her established "Library on the Loose!" program to



LOTL Evolving

Creating LOTL 2.0

- Find community partners
- Apply for grants
 - Delaware Library Associate Community Engagement grant
- Getting administrative buy-in
- Establishing a time and place
- Delegating tasks
 - Who will apply for grants (Nicole)
 - Who will find community partners (Ewa)
 - Who will create promotional and marketing materials (Brice)



Library on the Loose! 2.0

Year 2 & Beyond: Mission and Goals

Mission: The mission of “Library on the Loose!” is to promote library awareness, through library services and resource sharing, within the community, resulting in more library engagement and an understanding of the impact the local public library has on the community it serves.

2.0 Goals

- Being the stopgap for families while school is out of session, as they lose access to many important resources during the summer
- Helping families get through the summer by providing staple pantry items, hygiene products, school supplies, and more
- Partnering with organizations to provide more information and free resources beyond the libraries scope

Location, Location, Location!

Location: Battery Park

- A large park many of our local families utilize, but also, many families that live outside the city of New Castle visit

Time: Saturday Mornings from 10 AM - 1 PM

- In order to be more accessible to families to catch families in the morning and around lunch time

Set-up: Near Playground

- To catch families using the park and encourage families attending LOTL to stay and play after picking up program resources



Donations & Grants



DLA Community Engagement Grant - \$800

The Kenny Foundation (ShopRite) - \$100

Herr's Has Heart - 10 cases of individually packaged popcorn & pretzels

Aldi Community Gift Card Program - \$500

The Wawa Foundation - 144 Soft Pretzels

Wegmans Community Giving - \$50

ACME Markets Foundation - \$50

Food Lion Feeds - \$250

Costco Charitable Giving - \$50

\$1,800



Community Support



LIBRARY ON THE LOOSE! New Castle Public Library **DONATION DRIVE**

The library is collecting donations of **UNUSED** school supplies and **TRAVEL SIZE** hygiene products for our Summer outreach program at Battery Park!

Hygiene Products

- menstrual products
- toothbrushes
- toothpaste
- hairbrushes
- shampoo
- conditioner
- deodorant
- soap
- floss

School Supplies

- rulers
- scissors
- erasers
- crayons
- glue
- markers
- folders
- notebooks
- backpacks
- pencils & pens
- color pencils

Deliver Donations To

New Castle Public Library, New Castle Senior Center, or New Castle Presbyterian Church

424 Delaware Street, New Castle DE 19720
Member of the New Castle County Public Library System



In-House Donation Drive

- Promoted on social media, online library event calendar, in local weekly newspaper, and on paper library program calendar
- Collected hygiene products and school supplies, May - August

New Castle Community Partnership

- Donated \$500 for school supplies

Community Collaboration of Delaware

- Split the cost of a Food Bank pantry order

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)

- Donated \$300 for books

New Castle Presbyterian Church

- Collected donations, May - August
 - Through a library provided donation bin
- Vacation Bible School participants did a summer project to collect school supplies



Partnerships

- **Community Collaboration of Delaware (CCD)**

- “We have built programs that meet people exactly where they are, whether they are struggling with substance use, rebuilding a life after incarceration, searching for housing, trying to feed their families, or simply needing someone who will not give up on them.”
- Umbrella organization
- Provided volunteers
- Connected partners

- **Pike Creek Dental**

- Distributed dental hygiene products
- Provided dental health resources

- **Face the Facts Delaware**

- Free Narcan training

- **Summer Collab**

- Provided summer camp resource information

- **Phoenix Family Resources**

- Distributed clothing items

- **Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS)**

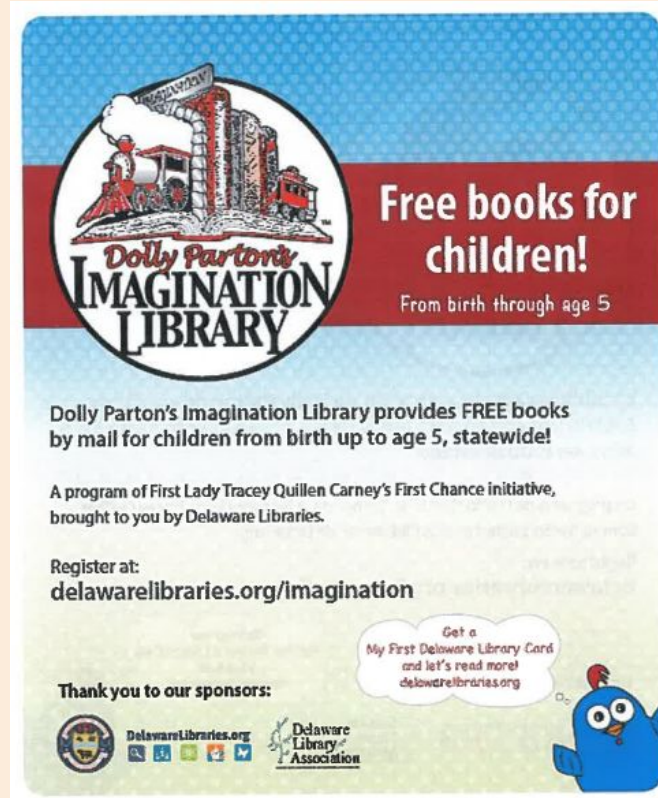
- In process of adding in 2026
- Health2Go Mobile Health Unit
 - provide health care resources



Library Resource Distribution

Folders included flyers, promoting statewide library resources, were prepared in advance and included:

- eMedia information
 - Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy, etc.
- Learning Express
- Transparent Language
- Social Workers in the Library
- Summer with the Library information
- Registering for a library card
- Imagination Library
- Library services
- Museum Pass
- New Castle Public Library program calendars
- Teen library program brochures
- Youth library program brochures
- Bookmarks
- etc.



Free books for children!
From birth through age 5


Dolly Parton's Imagination Library provides FREE books by mail for children from birth up to age 5, statewide!

A program of First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney's First Chance initiative, brought to you by Delaware Libraries.

Register at:
delawarelibraries.org/imagination

Get a My First Delaware Library Card and let's read more!
delaware@brins.org

Thank you to our sponsors:



Get **FREE** online access to eMedia

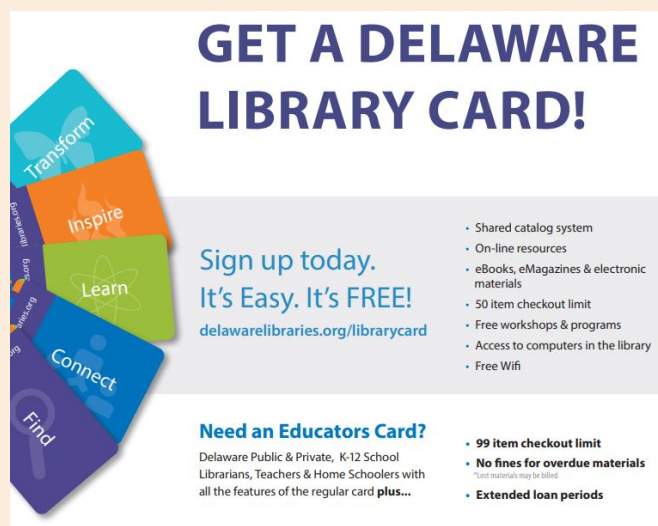


Need assistance?
Speak with a Specialist!



Make an Appointment or just walk in!

delawarelibraries.org/getconnected



GET A DELAWARE LIBRARY CARD!

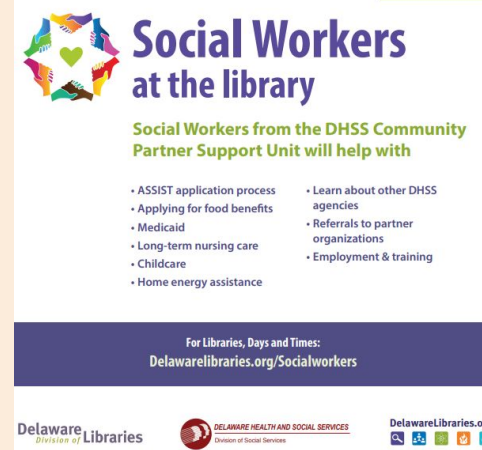
Sign up today.
It's Easy. It's FREE!

delawarelibraries.org/librarycard

- Shared catalog system
- On-line resources
- eBooks, eMagazines & electronic materials
- 50 item checkout limit
- Free workshops & programs
- Access to computers in the library
- Free Wifi

Need an Educators Card?
Delaware Public & Private, K-12 School Librarians, Teachers & Home Schoolers with all the features of the regular card plus...

- 99 item checkout limit
- No fines for overdue materials
- Extended loan periods



Social Workers at the library

Social Workers from the DHSS Community Partner Support Unit will help with

- ASSIST application process
- Applying for food benefits
- Medicaid
- Long-term nursing care
- Childcare
- Home energy assistance
- Learn about other DHSS agencies
- Referrals to partner organizations
- Employment & training

For Libraries, Days and Times:
Delawarelibraries.org/Socialworkers

Delaware Libraries | DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES | Delaware Libraries.org



It's your **FREE** entry to art, culture, entertainment & so much more! Get a **Museum Pass** today!

delawarelibraries.org/museumpass

Library Outreach Materials

Physical Giveaway Items

Pantry

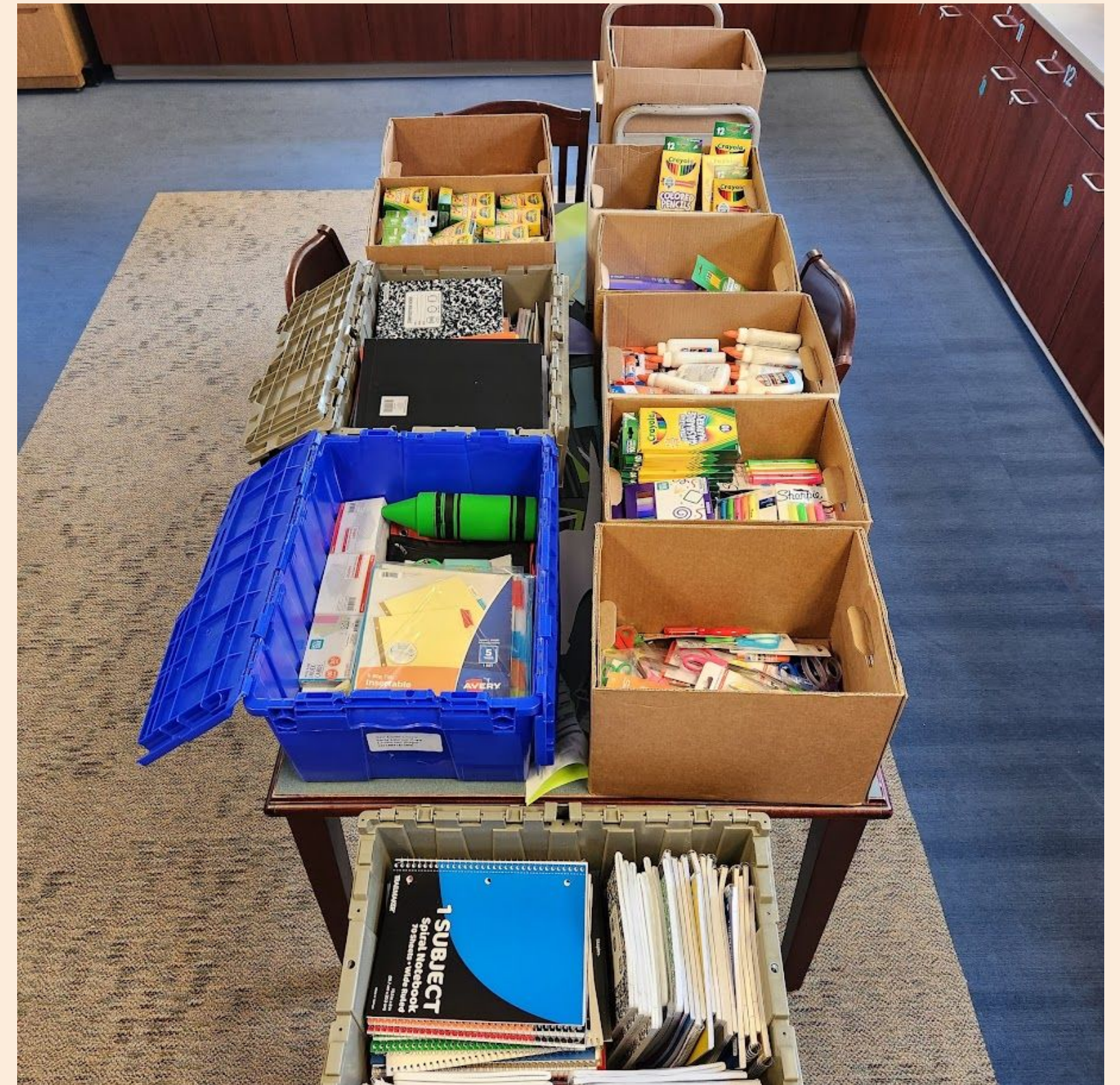
Bread, canned foods, cereal, chips, peanut butter, fruit (apples, oranges)

Hygiene

Toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, soap, body wash, deodorant, menstrual products

Books

5-6 full boxes of books per day
(We lumped two grades together per box:
Prek-K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, etc.)



Learning Curves

RUN!
IT'S THE BOOK
POLICE!



Permits

Be aware: any programs happening in a public outdoor space may require a permit!

Do not assume that law enforcement will automatically be on board with your event just because you have good intentions and/or only have free items to give away.



Learning Curves

In Case of Rain...

Schedule a rain date, or do what we did and move indoors for the day!

** Your decision will ultimately be based on your location's staff capacity.*

For small libraries and/or libraries with limited staff, it may not even be a choice: there simply aren't enough hands on deck to move to another day and that's ok!

This also leads us right into a VERY important discussion about staff burnout..



Learning Curves



Learning Curves

Staff Burnout

- Don't go too big your first year - expand gradually as you discover what your community needs
- It's ok to say no to adding more partners and services
- Plan according to the size of your team
- **Recruit more volunteers!!**



Learning Curves

Volunteers

Don't underestimate the amount of loading, unloading, and setup required!

Volunteers were most needed for:

- Packing up and loading cars the day before
- Unloading the day of

Volunteers at the library table/tent were a nice bonus for us, but not necessarily needed until the school supply giveaway in August.

- *Base your own needs off the size of your community and anticipated attendance.*



Learning Curves

Expect the unexpected!

School Supply Giveaway 2025

- 500 attendees
 - most within the first 40 minutes
- Arriving an hour before the start time
- “Sold” out within 40 minutes of start
- Mob mentality

Changes for 2026

- Set up earlier
 - at least 2 hours before
- Stanchion lines
- More volunteers
- Premade supplies
 - pencil cases with pencils, erasers, etc...
 - some limitations with this



Evaluation

Attendance - 742 Total

- May: 40
- June: 85
- July: 117
- August: 500

Books - 438 Total

- Adult
- Teen
- Kids

Hygiene Items - 851

- Shampoo
- Soap Bars
- Deodorant
- Pads
- Tampons
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Razors
- Floss
- Handsoap
- Bodywash
- Hair brushes

School Supplies - 900 Items

- Color pencils
- Pencils
- Markers
- Highlighters
- Scissors
- Pens
- Gluesticks
- Index Cards
- Folders
- Pencil Cases
- Calculators
- Notebooks
- Lunch boxes
- Erasers
- Sharpeners
- Staples
- Tape
- Sheet protectors
- Backpacks
- Rulers
- Paper
- Dividers
- Ring binder
- Crayons

Food - 1157

- Chips
- Mac & Cheese
- Oatmeal
- Cereal Bars
- Crackers
- Fruit Cups
- Juice Boxes
- Water Bottles
- Trail mix
- Pasta
- Pasta Sauce
- Beans
- Bread
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly

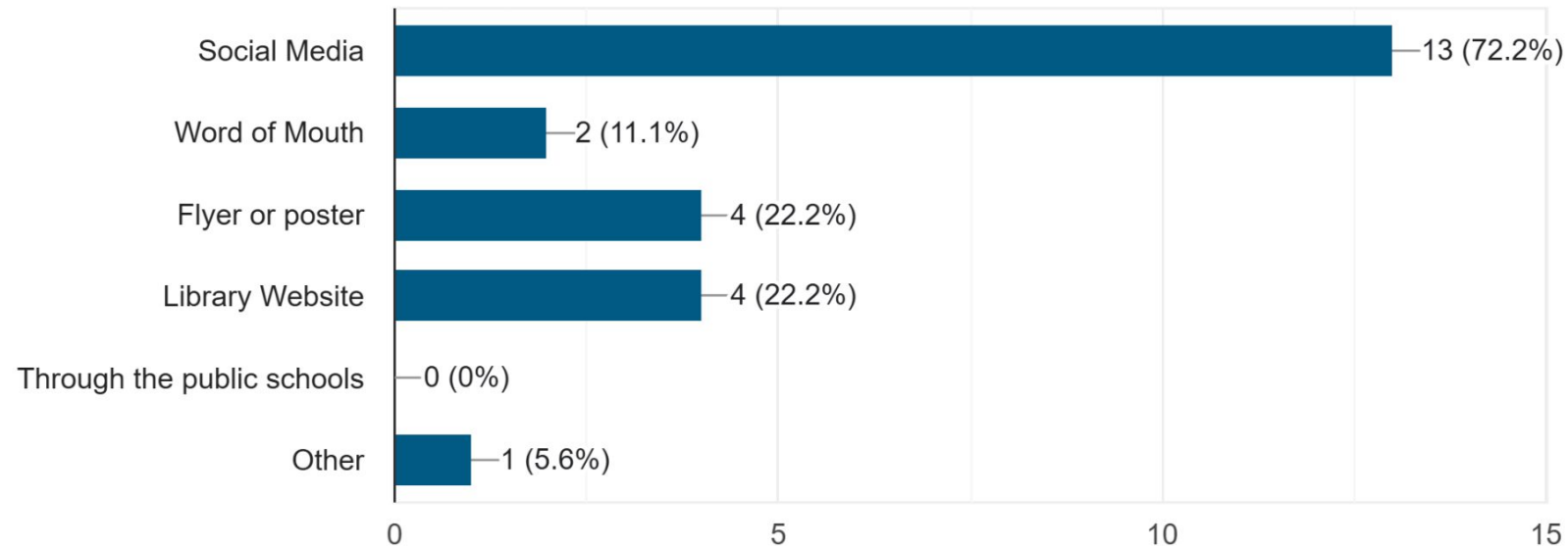
Resource Folders - 150



Survey Results

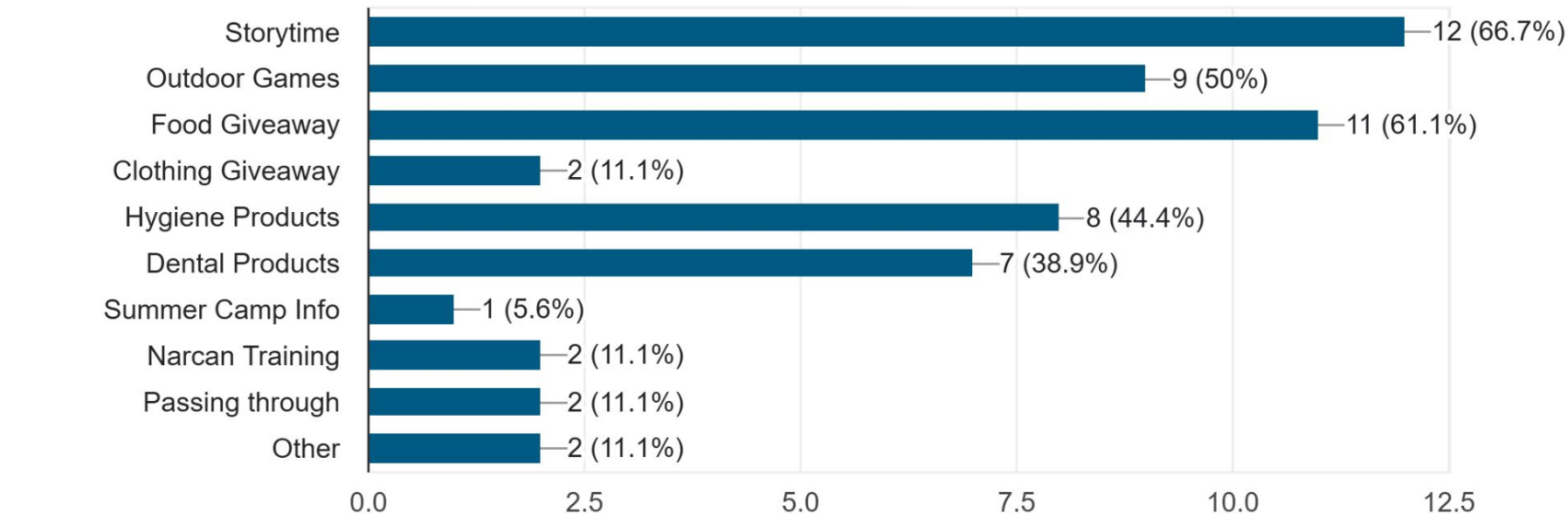
Where did you hear about Library on the Loose!

18 responses



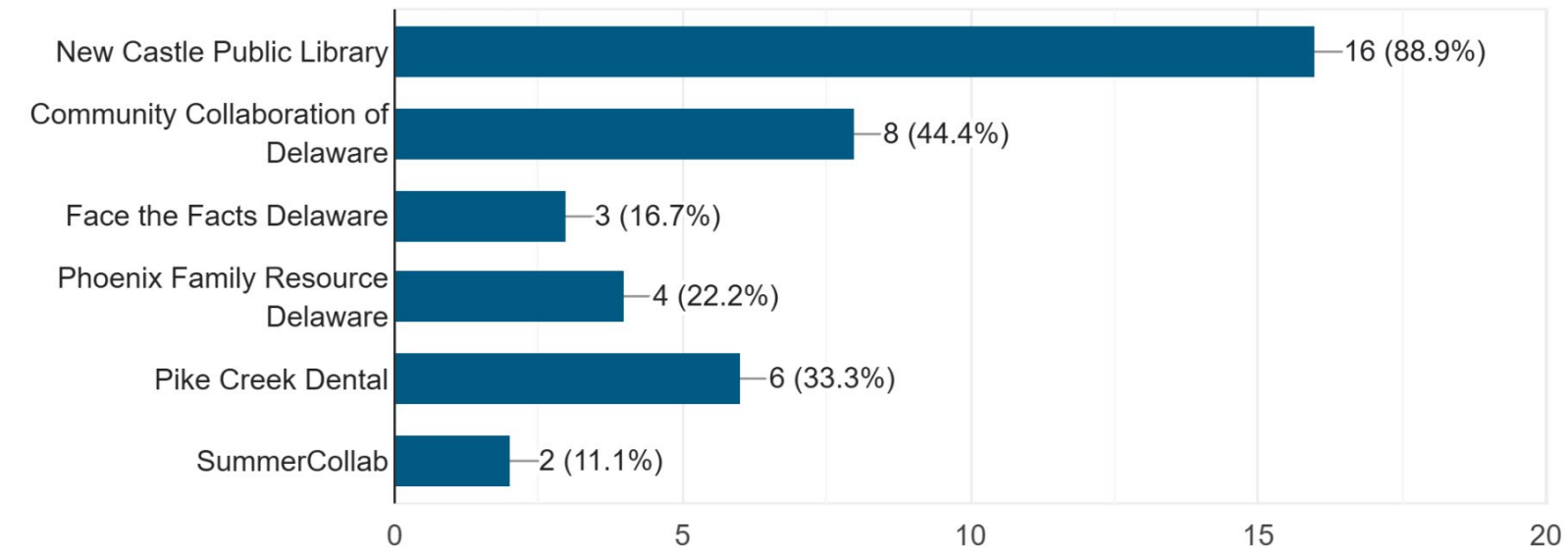
What brought you to Library on the Loose!

18 responses

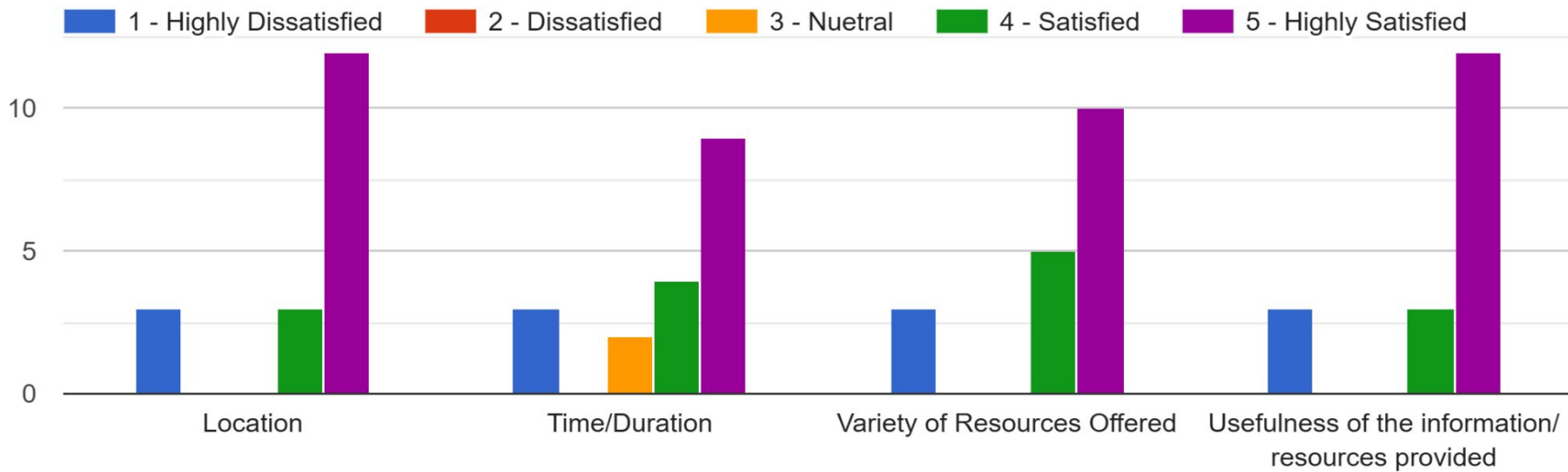


Which resource partner was most helpful for you?

18 responses



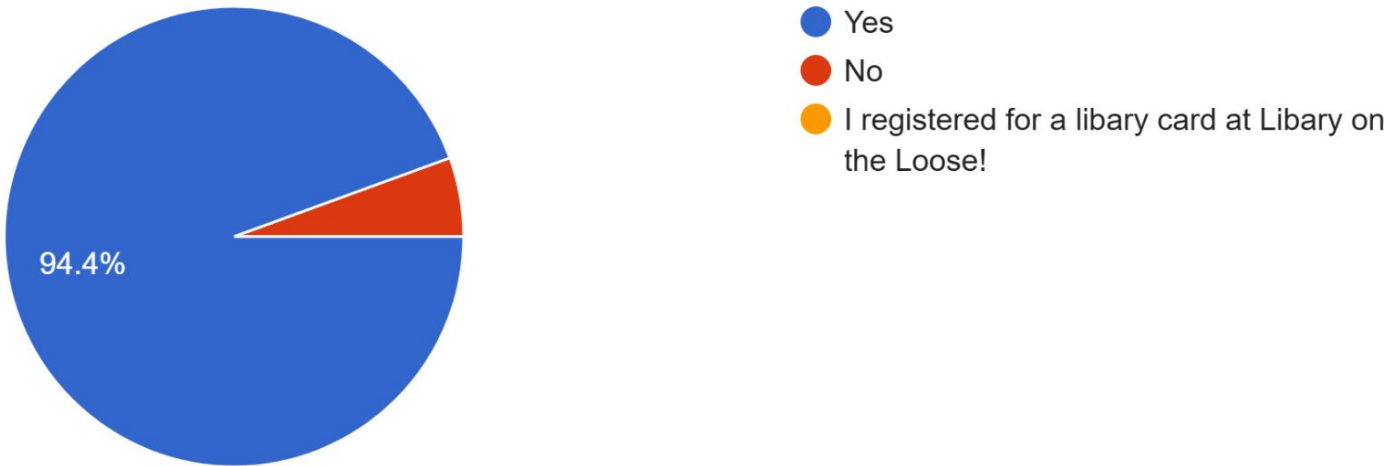
How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the event:



Survey Results

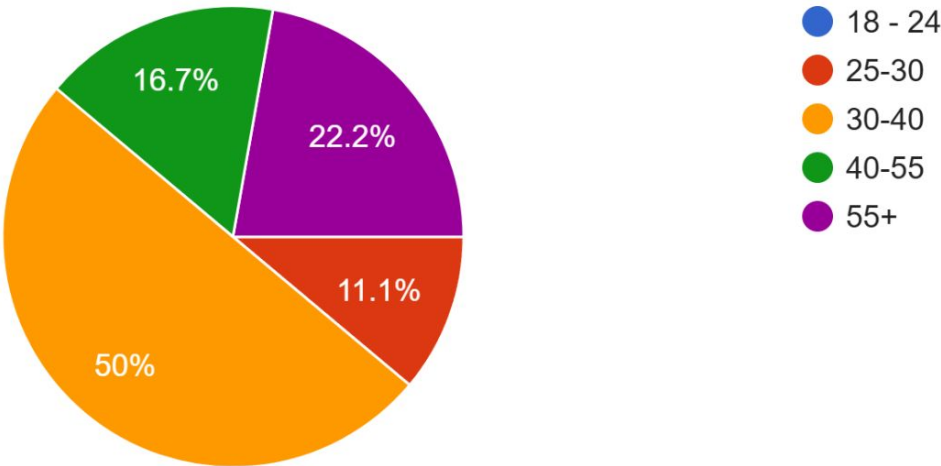
Do you have a library card in the state of Delaware?

18 responses



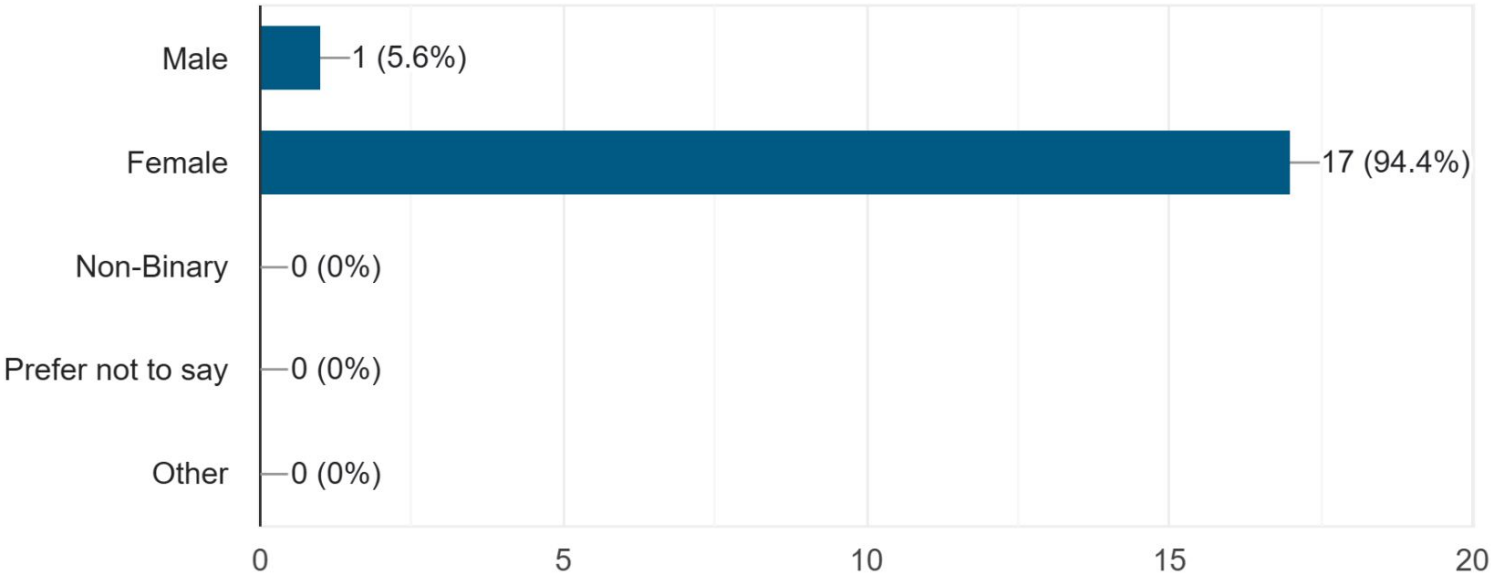
Age Range

18 responses



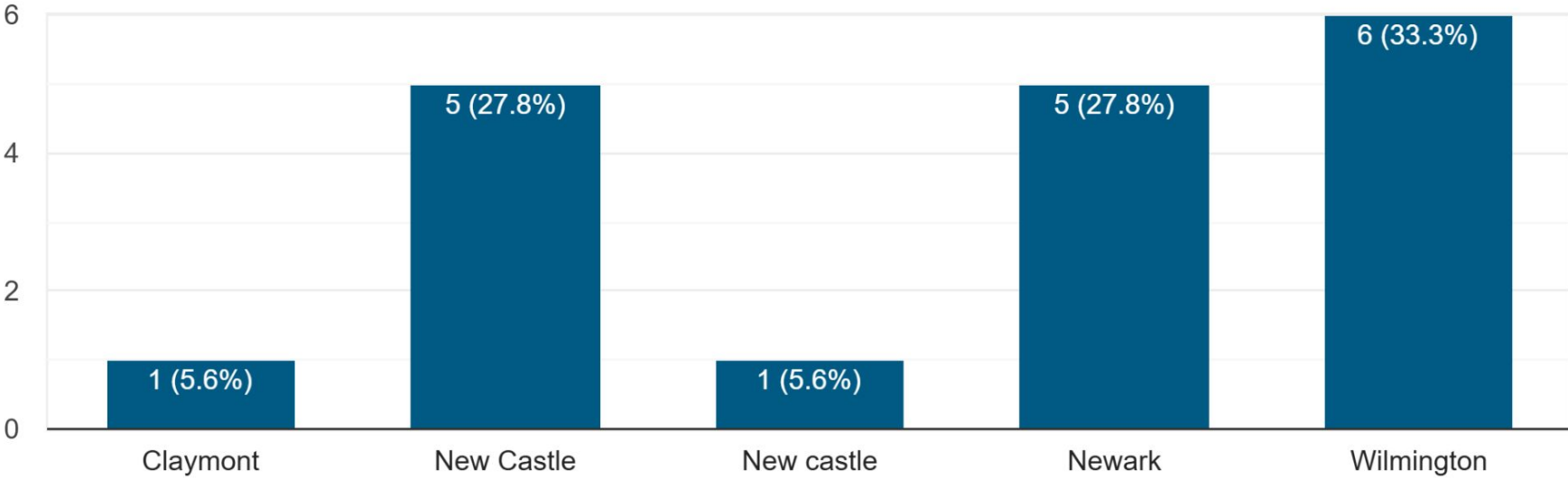
Gender

18 responses



What Delaware city do you reside in?

18 responses



Survey Results

What were the age(s) of the child(ren) that came to Library on the Loose!

- 0 - 4: 12
- 5 - 9: 10
- 10 - 13: 6

Which resources do you think we missed, that would have been helpful for you and your family?

- Housing Information
- More Food **x4**
 - allergy friendly snacks
- Personal Hygiene products **x6**
 - hair care, body wash, lotion, etc...
- Bike safety items
- Health Care Information **x4**
 - prenatal, postpartum
 - pediatric
- Kids clothing and school uniforms



1 Delaware Street, New Castle DE 19720

New Castle Public Library Presents:

LIBRARY ON THE LOOSE!

Survey



bit.ly/LOTLSurvey

Complete this survey for a chance to win an Amazon Fire 7 tablet!



Putting it All Together

Evaluate Your Library's Community

- Determine if your community could benefit from this type of program
 - Use U.S. Census Data and state Department of Education statistics
 - Search for free and reduced lunch statistics, poverty percentages, age demographics, etc.

Apply for Grants & Donations

- Search for area organizations with established philanthropic departments
- Create a grant toolkit*

*Grant Toolkit

- Library mission statement
- Program/event mission statement
- 501(c)3 certificate
- Annual Budget
- W-9
- Employer Identification Number (EIN)

Get Administrative Buy-in

- Use your findings from the above to advocate for your community
- Networking goes a long way - your library's administrators may know people and resources that can help

Solicit Community Partners & Volunteers

- Build a community to help you run this program.
- More partners = a larger reach
 - more resources, engagement, promotion, etc.
- Mutually beneficial

Host Donation Drives

- Place a donation bin in a high traffic area in your library
- Partner with local organizations to host passive drive locations in their buildings
- Promote the drive and its locations on social media, in house, on your library's website, local newspaper, etc.

Q & A

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New Castle Public Library
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New Castle, DE 19720

Please take a moment to
complete the program survey.



SCAN ME!

References

Campana, K., Mills, J. E., Kociubuk, J., & Martin, M. H. (2022). Access, Advocacy, and Impact: How Public Libraries Are Contributing to Educational Equity for Children and Families in Underserved Communities. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 36(4), 561–576. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2021.2017375>

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