



Bennington Free Library

Volume 29, No.1

A Quarterly Newsletter

April 2024

A New Vision for the Future

The library has come a long way since its beginnings as a gentleman's reading room in 1865. Today the library is an all-inclusive institution located in the heart of Bennington.

Although the library is more inclusive, we see a group of people who do not visit us, and we encourage them to come to the library. The age group from 14 to 34 is the most unrepresented at the library. Moving the middle school to the outskirts of town is one of the reasons that teens rarely visit the library. We know how busy teens are with after-school programs but let's consider latch key kids. If teens had transportation from school to the library it would provide another location where they could do homework, hangout with friends and even enjoy a book or two. Librarians would be on hand to aid with research and high-speed internet is available. Having a bus stop at the library, not only a school bus drop-off but a regular bus stop, would offer our teens as well as anyone who does not have access to a car a way to visit.

It's not just the teens that are missing from the library. It would be nice to think that at eighteen everyone in Bennington graduated high school and left to continue their studies elsewhere; but as you look around the community, there are many new/young adults in Bennington. Why are they not in the library? It may be that our open hours don't align with their downtime hours, or maybe we are not offering what they want. The only way the library will find out what is needed is by asking questions. I task each of the library's patrons to ask everyone they know if they use the library and if not, why? I empower you all to become ambassadors for the library and look forward to hearing from you.

Another way to encourage people to visit the library is to hold programs that appeal to a wide range of people. How much easier to see what the community has to offer all in one place; a one stop shop. Similar to a job fair the library would hold a community fair with organizations from the area coming to provide information on their group and sign up new members. The broader variety of community organizations that the library can manage to gather together the more inviting the community fair will be to everyone.

What an excellent way for newcomers to the area to learn what they can participate in.

No matter how easy it is to get to the library, there has to be a reason for the people to come. The library has come a long way from just providing books and it is time that the community knows what is available. To this end, library staff will be seen out in the community more often so that potential patrons know just what they are missing.

Creation of a gaming room with various programming opportunities is being considered. I also remain mindful that more craft programs were requested last year and I hope to start a monthly "Sit & Sew" for all those who wield a needle. Watch out for more details in our "Month in a Minute" posting.

In closing for now, volunteers are the lifeblood of the library. Without them we would not be able to offer as much as we do. I would like to see their status at the library formalized and to reestablish a friend's group

Our volunteers are obviously dedicated to the library as they show up on a regular basis to help with programs, fundraisers, and processing materials. They deserve to be recognized as our dedicated friends.

I invite you all to come and enjoy library resources and to help as the library develops a more public role in the community.

Wendy Sharkey

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Director's Letter

Change is difficult and like everything else the library is changing. After 15 years at the helm, Lynne Fonteneau McCann has retired and I, Wendy Sharkey, have been recruited to take her place. I've been at the library for 25 years so you will have seen me around but feel free to introduce yourself and let me know of any ideas you have.

Coming soon to the library a change for the better: our aging internet and phone system will be swapped out for a faster, more reliable service. Planning is underway and we are attempting to keep service disruption to a minimum. We will, if necessary, find a creative way to continue serving our patrons and as always, we will give you plenty of notice of any disruption. Once installed both systems will deliver better service for all of us.

The Children's room has also been changing. Johnna and Linda continue to swap out the themes each month but the biggest change has been the new STEAM center. Coming from an engineering background it is heartwarming to see children exploring science, technology, engineering, arts, and math all while playing, having fun, and not even realizing they are learning.

With all the change that is happening it's good to have something to rely upon. The librarians continue to be creative, and develop new and returning programs. The successful series of recycling programs will culminate with the 2nd Annual Craft Swap on April 20th. It was such a success last year and everyone has been so looking forward to it that it is sure to be a great hit again this year. Also look out towards the end of the year for another "Fit it Fun" event. Our first event resulted in many items being returned to service including a stand mixer, several lamps, some clothing, and a vacuum.

Another mainstay of the library are our many volunteers. This newsletter lists all those who have volunteered over the past year. We acknowledge your dedication and applaud your service. We could not do everything we do without you.

Of course, change can only happen when there are sufficient funds, so to all those who have already given to the annual fund, I extend a huge thank you. To those who have yet to give please consider a donation in any amount to help the library create more programs and services for all ages. It is the generous donations of the public that allow us to provide a safe, educational, and entertaining space for all.

In closing I would like to remind you that I am always open to suggestions, come find me and we will talk.

Wendy Sharkey



In Memoriam

We note with sorrow, the loss of the following supporters and friends of the Library:

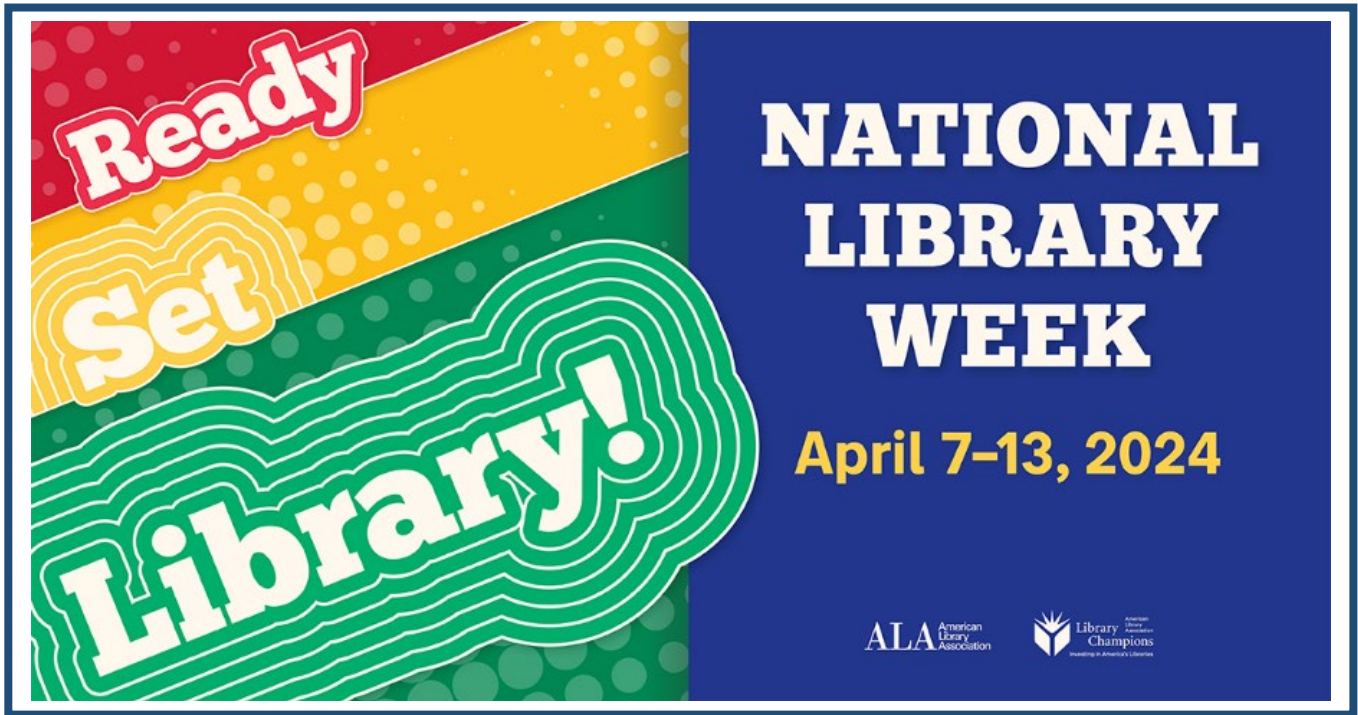
Judith Cohen	Francis Birkmeyer	Donald Farley
Helen Greaney	Alec Evan Haag	
Jean Marie Kellum	Aaron Lundy	Carole Maroney
John McClay	Viola Myers	

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK APRIL 16-22, 2024

Thank you for all you do!

The Bennington Free Library is fortunate to have many wonderful volunteers. In 2023 they donated time in Technical Services, the Children's Room, Adult Reference Services, Circulation, Interlibrary Loans, Administrative Services, in the Vermont History Room, and as Directors and Trustees* on the Library's Board.

Andrea Alli	Jeannie Jenkins	Nancy Pearlman
David Banulis	Tom Jorgenson	Chris Poggi
Al Bashevkin	Ashley Brenon Jowett	John Poggi
Aiden Bevin	Clara Jowett	Michael Rancourt
Jade Boyton	Douglas Jowett	Larry Roberson
Kelly Brenon	Michael Kennedy	Paul Roy
Charlie Buckley	Jennifer Kern	Kerry Ryan
Sonya Burdge	Jan Ketterer	Leah Ryan
Linda Bush	Karson Kiesinger	Mary Ryan
Cheryl Conklin	Tricia Kowalchyk*	Megan Sala-James
Brian Cunningham*	Ann Kremers	Dana Schildkraut
Christine Cunningham	Kelley Legacy*	Seall, Inc.
Dotti DePollo	Rhonda Levin	Helen Sharkey
Suzy Donavan	Nathalie Libby	Bruce Smith*
Linda Donigan	Bill Lyons	Laura Stark
Bridget Elder	Sara Lea Mandela	Sharon Stepp
Ann Fort	Jackie Marro*	Hailey Suzumu
Gabriella Giorgi	MAUHS Interact Club	Robin Tarnas
Kylan Glaski	Samuel Matunas	Kay Trafton
Jon Goodrich*	Susan McKenna*	P.J. Venti*
Misti Granger	Norma McShane*	Leonora Volker
Diana Griffiths	Jane Moriarity	Cindy Waters
Carolyn Groux	Michael Munson*	Michelle Wieggers*
Carrie Gutbier	Yanna Nikitas	Richard Williams
Tom Haley	David Newell*	Abeh Woods
Ellen Havlak	Meg Outwater	Fiona Young
Rick Havlak	Amanda Pamies	Coleen Zimpfer
Brennan Holland	Jackson Paquin	
Diane Howard		



Ready, Set, Library! National Library Week: April 7-13

The theme for National Library Week 2024, “Ready, Set, Library!,” promotes the idea that in our always-online world, libraries give us a green light to something truly special: a place to connect with others, learn new skills, and focus on what matters most.

No matter where you find yourself on the roadmap through life’s journey—preparing for a new career, launching a business, or raising a family—your library provides an inclusive and supportive community where everyone belongs.

Get ready to explore, become inspired, and connect with your library this National Library Week. Libraries are there for you, all the way to the finish line.



Back by Popular Request: Second Annual Earth Day Craft Supply Swap!

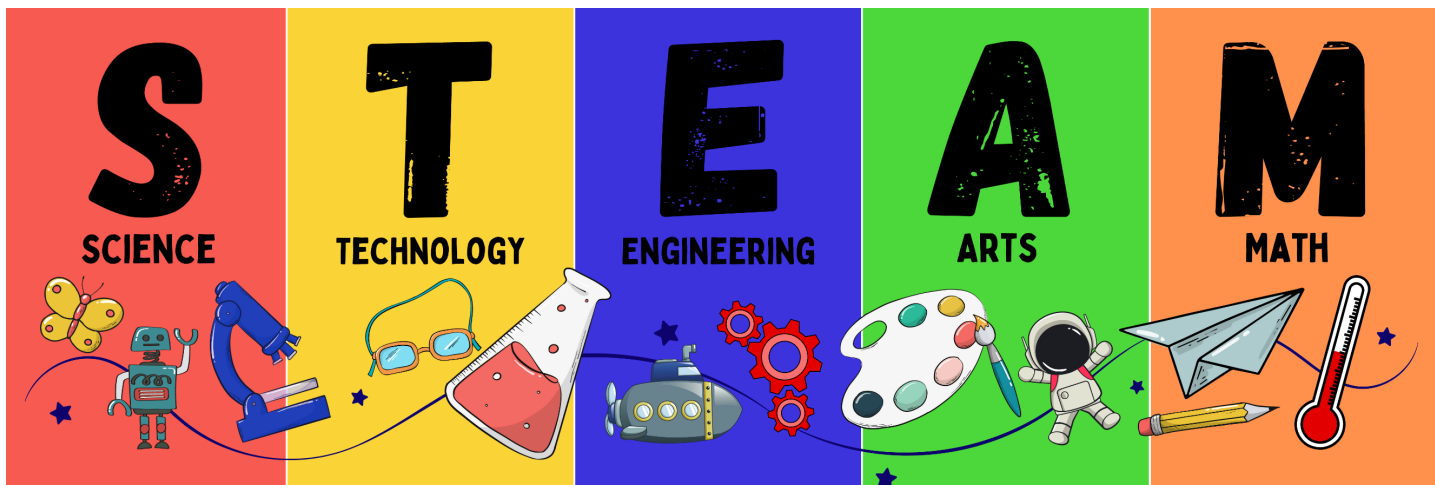
Saturday, April 20th: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Recycle your unused craft stash guilt free and pick up some “new to you” supplies. No “stuff”? No problem.

Drop off donations during the library’s open hours Monday April 15th through Friday, April 19th. Knitting, sewing, scrap booking, crochet and art supplies are sought.

Everyone is welcome. You don’t have to swap to shop, but bring a bag or two to carry your new treasures home.

All items are free while supplies last.



Design by Dana Schildkraut

Check out the new **STEAM Center** in the **Children's Room - a work in progress!**



Reading STEAM Books



Building with Magna-Tiles & Lights

A Huge Thank you for the Development & Support of the STEAM Center to:



**Bennington Bookworms
Vermont Humanities/VELI**

Dana Schildkraut

Dr. Christine Cunningham

William Fisk & Caroline Morse



Constructing Catapults

First Fix It Fun Community Repair Event



The first Fix It Fun community repair event co-hosted by the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance and the Bennington Free Library was held Saturday, February 17 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Six local fixers shared their skills and repaired clothing and fabric items, kitchen appliances, lamps, a table, a vacuum cleaner and a bicycle. Everyone enjoyed the magic of fixing: seeing lovingly used objects work like new again!

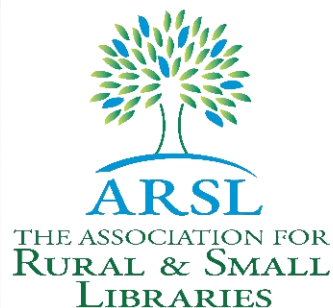
Written comments on exit surveys included many thanks to the organizers, fixers, and volunteers and:

“Have heard about such programs elsewhere, so very happy to see one locally.”

“I greatly appreciate better eyes than mine to fix things!”

“Appreciate knowing there are ‘fix it’ folks around, still making old stuff work. Thank you!”

The Association for Rural and Small Libraries awarded Bennington Free Library a Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries Grant for this event, allowing the library to purchase refreshments and materials for fixers, giveaways for participants, and raffle prizes for attendees. This funding will be used to host a second Fix It Fun community repair event near the end of this year. Stay tuned for details!





Third Thursday Readers

Want to grow your reading this spring? Join Third Thursday Readers!

Third Thursday Readers is a book club for adults 55+ years young sponsored by Green Mountain RSVP and the Bennington Free Library. The group meets monthly, every Third Thursday at 10 AM. Meetings are held using Zoom. You can join using your tablet, computer or phone, including dialing in on your phone. If you are not sure how to join, just ask!

For more information, please contact Karson Kiesinger, Reference and Adult Services Librarian by email: reference@bfli.org or by calling 802-442-9051 or contact Kaylee Derby, Green Mountain RSVP Bennington County Volunteer Coordinator by email: kderby@svcoa.net or by phone at 802-772-7838.

2023 Library Wish List Donors, 2023

Children's Room:

Carol Gaillard
The Goswami Family
The Hastings Family
David & Diane Howard
Dylan Krawczyk
McKenzie Krawczyk
K.M. Loos
Ellen Millington
Sharon Stewart

Adult Fiction/Non Fiction:

Bill & Linda Lyons
Edith Prandini
Raymond & Joyce Croteau
Diana Griffiths
Sarah Stanley
Nancy Coleman & Dick Frantz



Summer hours at the library

Monday: 10-7 Tuesday: 10-5 Wednesday: 10-5

Thursday: 1-7 Friday: 1-5 Saturday: 10-5

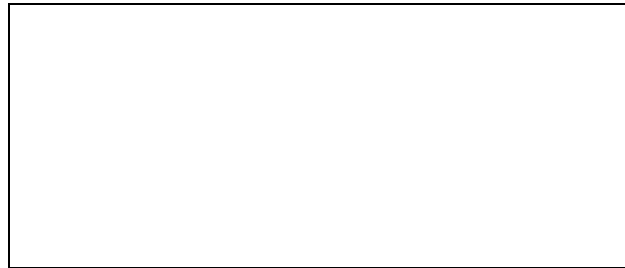
Saturday: June – September 10-1

Closed July 4th and Bennington Battle Day

Bennington Free Library

101 Silver Street
Bennington, VT 05201
1-802-442-9051
<http://benningtonfreelibrary.org>

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Permit # 10
Bennington VT



Social Capital Talk

Join Katrina Hastings, Social Capital Coordinator for Sunrise Family Resource Center at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 30 for an information session about social capital: what it is, why it matters and how to increase your social capital and improve your life.

This information session is for adults; childcare will not be provided.

Light refreshments will be available.

For more information, call 802-442-6934 and ask for Katrina or email: k-hastings@sunrisepcc.com.



Our Library has been serving the Bennington community since 1865.

Please consider making a legacy bequest to the Library.

Your gift will benefit our community for generations to come.