



Celebrating 10 Years of Bridging the Literacy Gap: Rochester Reading Champions

As we mark a significant milestone, the Rochester Reading Champions (RRC) program stands as a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives in transforming lives. For a decade now, RRC has been on a mission to bridge the literacy gap and unlock untapped potential within our community. This year, as we celebrate our tenth anniversary, we reflect on the journey that brought us here and look ahead with renewed determination.

The inception of RRC can be traced back to the visionary leadership of Audrey Betcher, the former Library Director who spearheaded the program's creation. Audrey's foresight laid the foundation for what would become a beacon of hope for individuals striving to overcome literacy challenges.

Audrey states, "The Rochester Reading Champions program came out of the Library's strategic planning in 2012. During the community input process, we really were encouraged to do more around basic literacy. We agreed but didn't know exactly what it would look like. We spent a year investigating needs and existing programs to make sure we did something impactful that didn't duplicate what already existed. I couldn't be prouder of the result!"

"Rochester Reading Champions" continued on page 2.



In This Issue



Friends Announce Scholarship Recipient
Page 6



Summer Playlist
Page 7



Have You Seen Our Summer Bookmobile Schedule?
Back Cover

"When my daughter started with Reading Champions, I saw the dramatic progress and heard good comments at teacher conferences."

"Rochester Reading Champions" continued from cover.

In the early years, the Rochester Area Foundation emerged as a steadfast supporter, believing in the potential of RRC to make a meaningful impact. The Otto Bremer Foundation also played a pivotal role in building the infrastructure necessary for effective data collection, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making and continued growth.

April Sutor, then with the United Way, issued a challenge that would shape RRC's trajectory towards sustainability. Her call-to-action spurred innovation and visionary thinking, propelling us toward resilience in the face of challenges to keep the program viable and evolving.

Central to RRC's success has been the unwavering dedication of individuals like Gail Harris, who served as the Rochester Reading Champions Coordinator until her retirement in October 2021. Gail and Audrey worked tirelessly to realize the program's mission, forging partnerships with key stakeholders such as The Reading Center, which continues to provide invaluable guidance and training.

Dedicated volunteer tutors have been paramount to the success of RRC. Quality structured literacy training and a strong desire for their students to succeed, ensure they are well-equipped to assist their assigned students



effectively with support from the program coordinator. Volunteers receive training at no cost to them, with a commitment to tutor through RRC for two years.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges, disrupting normal operations and exacerbating the need for literacy support within the community. With leadership changes; Karen Lemke's promotion to Library Director, and Tammy Fritz as our new Literacy Services Coordinator; RRC refocused its efforts on expanding training options to meet the surge in demand for community literacy support.

Since the end of 2021, RRC has witnessed extraordinary growth, doubling the number of volunteer tutors and reaffirming its commitment to serving the community. Collaborations with community partners have further strengthened RRC's reach, providing safe spaces for tutors and students to connect.

To be eligible for RRC, students must reside in the RPL service area, be at least 6 years of age, struggle with reading and/or writing at grade level, and be unable to afford private tutoring. Students and their families commit to working with a tutor twice a week for 45-60 minutes, underscoring their dedication to the program.

As of the end of 2023, the dedicated RRC volunteers had delivered an impressive 9,567 free lessons,



"RRC not only helped me improve my reading, but it also gave me the courage to pursue my dreams. Thank you for believing in me."

dedicating a total of 29,030 hours to empowering individuals through literacy. Their impact reverberates far beyond the statistics, as the program could not exist without the continued commitment of trained and caring volunteers.

In the words of one participant, "RRC truly transforms lives." As we celebrate a decade of achievement, let us recommit ourselves to the vision of a community where every individual can thrive, empowered by the gift of literacy.

"The support and encouragement I've received from my RRC tutor have been life-changing. I'm forever grateful for this program."

If you are interested in learning more about joining our team of volunteers or participating in the Reading Champions program, please send an email to read@rplmn.org.



Letter from the Director

Big things are happening all around us in Rochester, with bold plans that are sure to change our downtown landscape in the coming years.

At Rochester Public Library (RPL), big things are also happening. Starting this summer, we will be studying our customers, community, and services, to make sure we're meeting the needs and expectations of our users.

In 2020, we adopted the mission of "Welcoming all to connect and learn," which led to pivotal changes in library service: the removal of all overdue fines, major changes in our delivery models during the pandemic, a significant shift in our operating hours in 2021, and the launch of a BookBox in 2023. While there have been positive changes over the last several years, and with the circulation of library materials higher than ever before, there's one area of concern for library leaders: a reduction in overall library cardholders.

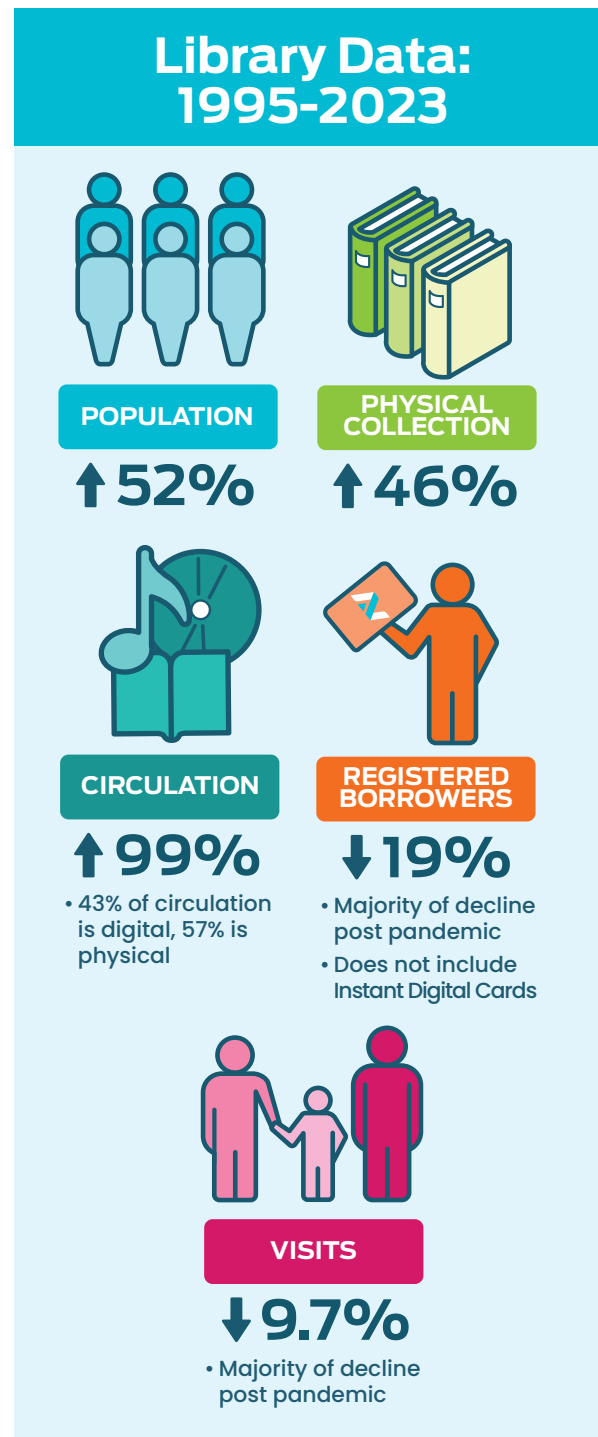
On average, in our service area, about 34% of households have an active library card. That percentage is lower than the statewide average in 2022, where 44% of Minnesotans had a library card.

Locally, cardholder rates vary significantly by neighborhood, with some parts of our community boasting a higher cardholder rate (47% for the highest), while other areas fall far below the average (28% for the lowest).

Working with a consulting firm over the next year, the Library Board and leadership team are poised to gain valuable insight into why the disparity exists for cardholder rates. We hope to hear from all areas of our community to learn more about challenges to accessing library services and ideas for making sure your library continues to be "welcoming all to connect and learn."

We hope you join us on this journey of learning about how the library can best meet the needs of Rochester and the surrounding area.

Karen Lemke
Rochester Public Library,
Director





ROCHESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOUNDATION

Rochesterfest Storytime

Tuesday, June 25 | 2-4PM

The Foundation will be hosting Storytime at Rochesterfest.

Please stop by, or send a message if you would like to READ a book for us!



Letter from the Foundation Director

Have you also been seeing the stories about librarians and libraries across the nation facing challenges? I am heartened by the Rochester Public Library's commitment to ensuring that everyone in our community feels welcome, safe, and able to find books that allow them to explore their interests, pursue research, or see reflections of themselves in materials. I am deeply grateful to all of you who feel strongly about library services, literacy, and the right to read. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! I write it in my thank you letters all the time: you really do make Rochester a better place to live.

Brenda Kardock

Rochester Public Library Foundation, Executive Director

Message from the Foundation President

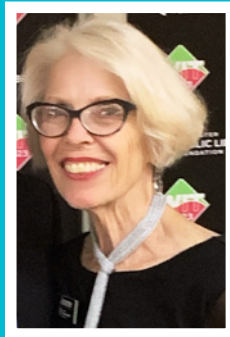
One of the things I like most about Rochester is our public library. There are few places that are as welcoming and inclusive to all people in our community.

I became involved with the Library Foundation approximately five years ago. One of the benefits of being on the Foundation board is that I've become much more aware about our library in general, the various programs offered, and the wealth of services it provides. It's impressive! And that's why I personally support the Library Foundation.

One of the roles of the Foundation is to raise funds to support the library's work, particularly new programs or pilot programs that are not in the budget. If you would like to know more about our library or Foundation, please reach out to me and I'd be happy to tell you much more about what we do and how you can get involved. There are so many ways you can volunteer or contribute.

Joanne Rosener

Rochester Public Library Foundation, President



Interested in Volunteering?



We value the skills and passions of volunteers who serve throughout the library. Volunteers assist, enhance, and support the work of Rochester Public Library.

The Foundation has several opportunities for volunteering:

- Fundraising Auctions for the Library
- Fundraising & Public Events
- Foundation Committee or Board

Visit www.rplmn.org/volunteer to learn more about these opportunities.



Save the Date

Saturday,
January 25th, 2025



Donate to the Library Foundation

YOUR dollars allow us to help develop the award-winning programs, technology, and services that our community has come to depend upon.

www.rplmn.org/donate



ROCHESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOUNDATION

Donors March 1 to May 30, 2024

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In Honor

Brenda Kardock
In honor of Library Team at RPL

Richard & Betty Buri
In honor of our children, grandchildren & great-grandchildren

Gerard & Carolyn Goulet
In honor of our grandchildren, Austin & Leah Willis

Gwen Riggan
In honor of Stephanie Pasch

Paulette & Mike Zenner
In memory of Amanda S. Carlson

Jeanette Bergler
In memory of Arnold Bergler

Erik & Elizabeth Ritman
In memory of Dr. Gerald Gau

Brenda Kardock
In memory of Frank Squadrito

Marilyn Campbell & Gerald Haas
In memory of Herb Erickson

Helen Kolb
In memory of Herb Erickson

In Memory

Doug Sween
In memory of Joan Sween

Gwen Riggan
In memory of Margaret Buswell Nelson

Wanda Hagquist
In memory of Don & Drew Hagquist

In Appreciation

Patricia J. Calvert
In appreciation of the Homebound Program

Dick & Joanne Rosener
In appreciation of Clara Steier

Janice Marie Baker
In appreciation of the library & all the helpers

In Celebration

Jeff & Denise Swinbank
In celebration of Gwen Riggan

Brenda Kardock
In celebration of Events Committee



LOOKING FOR ITEMS FOR OUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING AUCTION

Please contact us if you would like to donate -
Gift cards, Spirits, Experiences, Baskets
foundation@rplmn.org



**FRIENDS OF THE
ROCHESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

FRIENDS BOOKSTORE

101 Second Street SW, Rochester, MN

**Mon-Thurs
11AM-6PM**

**Fri & Sat
11AM-2PM**



Quality used books at bargain prices.
Funds raised support the
Rochester Public Library.

rplmn.org/friends

507-328-2306



**ALL ARE
WELCOME**

Friends Announce Scholarship Recipient

This year's recipient of the Friends of the Rochester Public Library scholarship for a library staff member is Pat Valdez, a shelver who will be attending RCTC to study Graphic Design. Their essay highlighted the warm, welcoming, and caring environment created by the amazing library staff which reduced their anxiety of being new to the state, new to the library, and new to using their chosen name for the first time in the workplace. Pat was appreciative of the award. "Receiving this scholarship was honestly a surprise and a relief! To me, it's just another way the library gives back to its community." Val Kaliszewski, President of the Friends Board, responded, "This scholarship program is a way to recognize an individual's contribution to ensuring the library continues to be the cherished institution that is celebrated by our community, as well as to encourage their long-term career goals. We are proud to support Pat's ongoing education!"



Thank You, Knutson Construction!

Friends recently needed to relocate our initial sorting and bookstore stock room to space on a different floor, adjacent to our book valuation operations. Friends would like to recognize Knutson Construction for generously donating the time of two carpenters who assembled and placed twenty new shelving units per our layout needs. They were able to complete the work much faster and more effectively than we could have done on our own. The newly consolidated space has enabled us to gain some efficiencies in our processes of repurposing gently used donated books for the benefit of the library.



**FRIENDS OF THE
ROCHESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**AUTUMN
BOOK SALE**

LIBRARY AUDITORIUM

**THURSDAY, October 10TH
5-7PM** *(members only preview)*

**FRIDAY, October 11TH
10AM-5:30PM**

**SATURDAY, October 12TH
10AM-5:30PM**

**SUNDAY, October 13TH
12-4PM**

**Memberships can be renewed
or purchased at the door.*

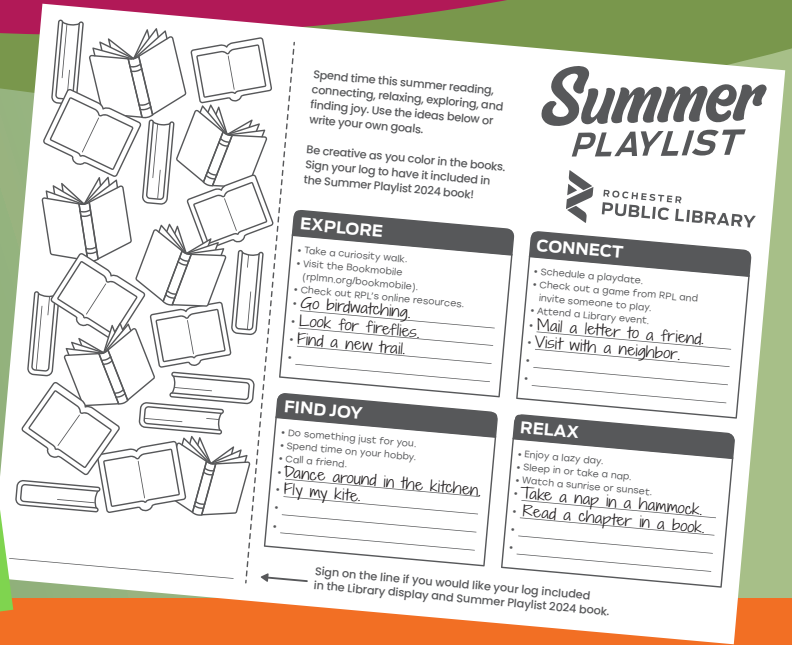
www.rplmn.org



Summer PLAYLIST

JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31

Spend time this summer reading, connecting, relaxing, exploring, and finding joy!



Check out our schedule of free summer events for kids & families! rplmn.org/events



ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

101 Second Street SE
Rochester, MN 55904
www.rplmn.org

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Organization
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PAID
Permit No. 62
Rochester, MN 55901



Have you seen our new summer Bookmobile schedule?

The Bookmobile started running on summer hours on June 1. Do you have the latest schedule? If you haven't picked up a yellow copy of the schedule at the library or from the bookmobile, you can find it online at www.rplmn.org/bookmobile. Be sure to save this page to look for updates to stops for weather.

The bookmobile will once again be in attendance for all of Rochester Public Music's FORWARD Concert series. Be sure to stop by for some amazing music and special summer giveaways!

Library Hours

Monday - Thursday
10AM-8PM

Friday - Sunday
10AM-6PM

Rochester Public Library
2024 SUMMER BOOKMOBILE SCHEDULE
June 4 - August 31

WEEK 1	WEEK 2
TUESDAY June 4, 18; July 2, 16, 30; August 13, 27 10:00 - 12:00 1924 17 1/2 St. NW, Sunset Terrace School 1:15 - 3:15 2505 59th St. NW 4:00 - 5:30 1000 Essex Pkwy NW, Watson Sports Complex	TUESDAY June 11, 25; July 9, 23; August 6, 20 10:00 - 12:00 1021 15th Ave. SE, Cub Foods 1:15 - 3:00 4122 Mallard Place SE 4:00 - 6:30 Eyota, 303 W 5th St., West Side Park *
WEDNESDAY June 5; July 3, 17, 31; August 14, 28 Closed June 19 10:00 - 12:30 5455 50th Ave. NW, Holy Spirit School 2:00 - 4:00 2240 7th Ave. NE, Churchill School forWARD Concerts start at 5:30pm on the following days: June 5 only 1738 E. Center St., MLK Jr. Park August 14 only 2021 Maywood Rd. SW, John Withers Sports Complex August 28 only 722 7th St. NW, Cook Park	WEDNESDAY June 12, 26; July 10, 24; August 7, 21 10:00 - 12:30 6196 Granite Dr. NW 2:00 - 4:00 909 17 1/2 St. SE forWARD Concerts start at 5:30pm on the following days: June 12 only 88 23rd Ave. SW, Cascade Lake Park July 10 only 1895 Allendale Park Ln. NW, Allendale Park August 21 only 4597 85th St. NW, White Oaks Park
FRIDAY June 7, 21; July 5, 19; August 2, 16, 30 10:00 - 12:00 1300 40th St. NW, Gage School 1:30 - 3:00 2800 Charles Ct. NW, Hylands 4:00 - 5:30 2435 20th St. SE, Longfellow School	THURSDAY June 13, 27; July 11, 25; August 8, 22 10:00 - 11:30 219 9th St. NW, Goose Egg Park 12:45 - 2:30 922 11th St. SE * 3:30 - 5:30 1500 36th St. SW, Bamber Ridge Park
SATURDAY June 8, 22; July 6, 20; August 3, 17, 31 10:00 - 1:00 405 36th Ave. NW, Bishop School 2:30 - 4:00 Oronoco, 115 2nd St. NW, City Hall 4:30 - 5:30 Oronoco, 3611 89th St. NW, Oronoco Estates	FRIDAY June 14, 28; July 12, 26; August 9, 23 10:00 - 12:00 2645 N. Broadway, Evangel Church 1:15 - 3:15 4400 55th St. NW, Christ Comm. Church 4:00 - 5:30 2209 25th Ave. NW, Nachreiner Park
SATURDAY June 15, 29; July 13, 27; August 10, 24 10:00 - 1:00 Byron, 10th Ave. & Frontage Rd., Park N Ride 2:30 - 4:00 4221 W. Circle Dr. NW, Hy-Vee 4:30 - 5:30 4464 Manor Park Dr. NW	

Summer Playlist
Summer Playlist starts June 1 and ends August 31st!

forWARD Neighborhood Park Concerts are a series of six free concerts - one in each of the city wards. These events feature live music, local food trucks, and family-friendly activities provided by Park & Rec's mobile Rec Trailer.

The following stops will have one-time only reading activities on the following dates:
Friday, June 21: Hylands
Wednesday, June 26: 17 1/2 St. SE (Franklin School)
Friday, June 28: Christ Community Church
Friday, August 9: Nachreiner Park
Tuesday, August 13: Watson Sports Complex

All concerts and bookmobile stops are FREE and open to the public. Stops marked with an asterisk ** are new.

ROCHESTER READING CHAMPIONS
LITERACY TUTORING



View the summer Bookmobile Schedule



<https://bit.ly/2024RPLBookmobile>

Find Us Online
@RochPubLibrary

