



# SCPL

Schenectady County Public Library



## ANNUAL REPORT 2017



### LITERACY LEADS THE WAY

In 2017 SCPL took a prominent role as the literacy leader in Schenectady County. Literacy, in all its forms, is the core mission of our library system. A Schenectady Foundation grant allowed the Phyllis Bornt Branch to become a Family Place Library and to provide early literacy play programs for children ages 1-3 and their caregiver. The crowning accomplishment of the grant was the designation of the Bornt Branch as one of over 500 Family Place Libraries in our country, after a May 15, 2017 site visit. The grant funded professional development and the purchase of early learning resources. Three Community Conversations were held to support and discuss literacy concerns. Early literacy experts from around the state shared best practices from their evidenced-based programs. Partnerships between the Library, Schenectady City School District, the County Department of Public Health, the Capital District Child Care Council, non-profit and faith based organizations, and interested community members resulted in the formation of Schenectady Takes Action for Reading Success (STARS). With the Library as lead organization, a STARS grant application to fund improvements to the Schenectady early literacy landscape is planned for 2018.

**IT TAKES A VILLAGE...** Over the years we have developed partnerships with community organizations to bring programming into our libraries or arranged for library staff to attend outreach events at their location. We collaborated in 2017 with County and community groups, including Public Health Services, SJTA, the Youth Bureau, MiSci, SCSD Parents Day Out, the NYS Department of Taxation, the League of Women Voters, Habitat for Humanity, Washington Irving Educational Center, City Mission, Capital District Child Care Council, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SICM, Early Head Start, Schenectady Day Nursery, Ellis Medicine, Hamilton Hill Arts Center, CREATE Community Studios, #SaveOurStreets, Jay Street Arts Festival, the Rotterdam Senior Citizen Center, and Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corp's Hall-iday Open House.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



As part of our literacy initiative, a series of writing workshops were held in 2017. Workshops offered include: **Polishing the Pearls: A Memoir Writing Workshop**, **Playwright's Journey**, **A Museum of Words**, **Poetry 1-2-3**, **Writing the Everyday Experience of African Americans**, **They Used To Call Me a Liar-Now They Call Me a Writer**, **Playing Tennis With a Net**, **Prose Poetry** and **Flash Fiction**.

In addition to writing workshops, we offered a sampling of other cultural, historical and social programs such as an Erie Canal lecture, the **U.S.S. Slater**, two Trivia Nights including **Gilmore Girls** and **Harry Potter** themes, a **Q.U.I.L.T.S** display, a **Chinese Cultural Series**, **Crafter-Days**, **Watercolor Painting**, **Adult Coloring**, a weekly film series. The library continued to serve its educational mission by offering training classes on subjects like **English as Second Language** classes, **Money Matters** financial literacy seminars, digital literacy classes and the **Getting Ahead** series, a 12-week session, where our facilitators build a safe place for participants to be able to think abstractly and critically about how poverty is effecting their lives and how to build a plan to create a different future story for themselves.

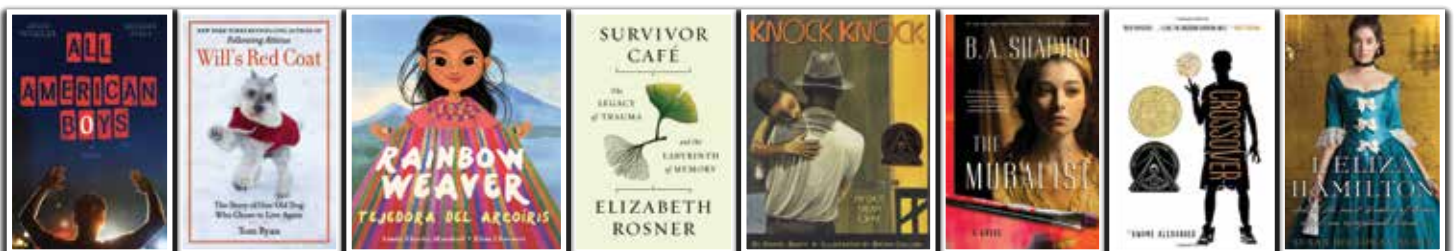
Highlights in Youth Services programs include classes offered for babies, school age and family participants. The **OH BABY!** series led caregivers through baby signing, baby food making and developmental movement. The **Price Chopper Kids Cooking Club with Jodie Fitz** fostered culinary skill development for school age participants during vacation week. **4-H** leaders and librarians offered a **STEM** series titled **Flight School**, showcasing experiments and principles of aeronautics. Another **STEM** themed event was **Science @ the Library**, co-sponsored by MVLS, which brought over 70 young scientists to the Niskayuna Library in October.

Partnerships and grants brought the following high profile authors and an illustrator to city schools and to our libraries: Bryan Collier, Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely, Kwame Alexander and Linda Elovitz Marshall. We also hosted Ira Marcks' **Comics Jam** event at the Central Library through a New York State Workforce Development grant highlighting careers in the arts.

We welcomed back beloved author, Tom Ryan, who visited several years ago with his dog Atticus as he began his tour of his bestselling book **FOLLOWING ATTICUS**. Tom discussed his newly published book, **WILL'S RED COAT**. We also welcomed back local author Elizabeth Rosner, who shared her fascinating non-fiction work, **SURVIVOR CAFÉ: THE LEGACY OF TRAUMA AND THE LABYRINTH OF MEMORY**. In the fall we had the privilege of hosting B.A. Shapiro, author of **THE MURALIST** and **THE ART FORGER** and Susan Holloway Scott, author of **I, ELIZA**.

The New York State Summer Reading Program for 2017, **Build a Better World**, included both programs to celebrate literacy and reading promotion incentives. Participants were encouraged to use **Beanstack**, a digital tracking system, to keep track of summer reading logs. Library staff worked hard to encourage active participation by school age readers and adult readers too. In addition, teen volunteers assisted library staff with Summer Reading Program registration, prize redemption and event set-up and clean-up. Family-based story programs were offered during the summer and were well received as they allowed for entire families to participate in reading activities together. Everyone enjoyed what the library staff created to promote community-wide literacy.

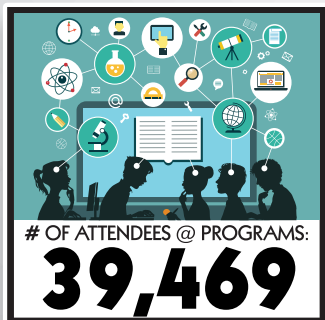
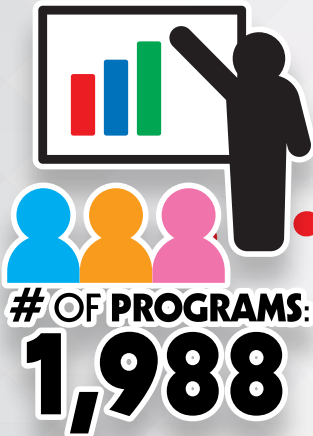
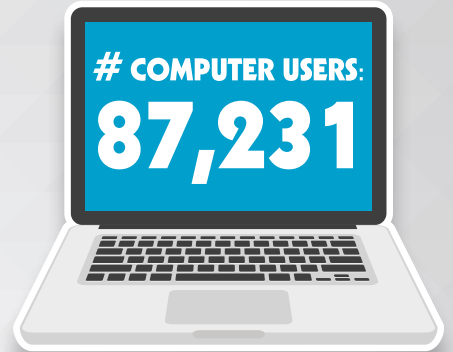
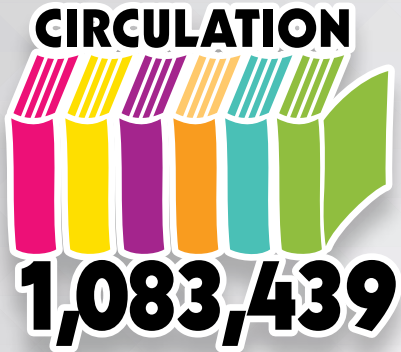
Overall, there was a 9% increase in summer program attendance and a 48% increase in Youth Summer Reading registrations over 2016. Children and teen readers logged 9,454 books read during summer months. We had a 32% increase in the number of adults registered from 2016 and a 127% increase in the number of books read. A total of 231 summer programs covering a wide variety of topics, for all ages, were held throughout the summer at all nine locations. A sample of programs include our **Tween Writing Camp**, the **Schenectady Theater for Children**, **Wildlife Alive**, the **New England Reptile Show**, **Melvin the Magnificent**, the **Puppet People**, **Traveling Farm**, **Balloon Extravaganza**, **LEGO programs**, **STEM programs** and youth focused book discussions. For the third year in a row we hosted our popular **ELECTRIC CITY COMIC CON** as part of our summer programming, with over 2,000 in attendance. A highlight of the summer was the August 21, 2017 Solar Eclipse. Thanks to the generous donation of hundreds of protective glasses from the Middleburgh Public Library, we held a solar eclipse viewing party attended by hundreds of community members.



OUR STORY



# STATISTICS



\* COMBINED FROM ALL 9 SCPL LOCATIONS.



## STAFFING

2017 brought significant staffing changes to our library system.

Serena Butch, our Coordinator of Youth Services and Assistant Library Director, retired after 38 years of service to our library system. With the County's strong commitment to literacy, the Coordinator of Youth Services position was restored to a singular position by our Legislature in our 2017 budget. One of our long-time Youth Services librarians, Kaela Wallman, was selected for this position. Chinasa Seyse was hired to replace Kaela who served at the Mont Pleasant and Bornt Branch libraries. We are honored that Chinasa has been selected to serve on the **American Library Association 2019 Caldecott Award Committee**.



Deborah Noyes, another of our Youth Services Librarians, also began her retirement mid-2017. April Fernandez was promoted to full time librarian at the Glenville, Niskayuna and Central locations. April already has made her mark by implementing successful new programs such as the **Tummy Time** and the **Oh Baby! Series**.

Angela Strong returned to SCPL in June to assume the role of Assistant Director of Library Operations and began her duties, which include overseeing daily operations to improve the efficiency and services to meet our patrons expectations.

## INFORMATION SERVICES

Digital library materials such as **Launchpads**, a pre-loaded tablet with learning-based apps for children, and **Hoopla**, a digital streaming service were added to the collection and have been very popular with patrons. Digital content circulation rose 13% in 2017.

Youth, Adult Services and branch staff collaborated to evaluate collections to ensure they meet the needs and interests of all of our patrons. Collection analysis, physical relocation of materials, creation of interesting displays, and promotion of new and popular items are all part of this process.

Thanks to a bequest from the family of Leah Leonard, a redesign of the New & Popular and Adult Magazine Collections was organized, with more space for new materials and face-out shelving to better show off book covers.



Upgraded internet bandwidth service (100 mbps) was installed at the Central Library to improve the quality of both wired and wireless public computer services. Sixty computers were purchased as part of the Board of Trustees Technology Plan. Wireless door counters were installed in our branch libraries. These new door counters indicated that our busiest month of the year was August and the busiest branch that month was Niskayuna with 10,006 patron visits.

## FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

New carpets were installed at three branches: Niskayuna, Scotia and Glenville, which also included the redesign of the children's area at Glenville Branch. The change allowed for improved use of the available space and encouraged families to stay, play and read. The parking lot at Woodlawn was re-paved and re-stripped. Volunteer gardeners at Niskayuna, Glenville, Rotterdam and Woodlawn worked hard to keep the grounds beautified in the spring, summer and fall. The Rotterdam Branch gardens received a much needed mulching and the Niskayuna Branch gardeners helped restore areas damaged during some building renovations. The Central library received an electric car charging station for community members who own an electric car.



During the summer of 2017, we hosted a Community Conversation Forum for the residents of Mont Pleasant. We surveyed the residents, attended meetings of the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood Association and spoke with community collaborators to identify the needs of the community for the new library. This helped to shape the design of the library and greatly assisted in planning for the resources and programs needed for the new library, which is expected to open in early 2019. In July, the County unveiled the design of the proposed Mont Pleasant Branch library. The plan became a reality for the Mont Pleasant neighborhood on October 27, 2017 when the former Chubby's establishment and the building next door were demolished to make way for a Spring 2018 ground-breaking. The building of a new Mont Pleasant Branch Library is part of a comprehensive plan to revitalize an entire area of the city of Schenectady and create a corridor of hope.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES



This past January, the Schenectady County Public Library, lost one of its foremost advocates and friends, Esther M. Swanker. Esther was, for many years, the President of the SCPL's Board of Trustees and was still a member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of the SCPL when she passed. I met Esther ten years ago when I first began working in Schenectady and discovering our mutual love of books quickly cemented our friendship. When I became trustee president in 2016, Esther was delighted and, during many meals at her favorite spot, the Mohawk Country Club, she was eager to share her advice about the role. I was fortunate to receive it. Beyond her wise counsel, however, her lasting gift to me – and to all of us who treasure our Library – lies in recognizing the reasons behind Esther's tireless commitment to its success.



Esther knew that the Library plays a significant role in transforming the quality of life for Schenectady County residents. Whether it's the many programs and activities designed to increase literacy in all its forms; the access to technology that helps countless individuals discover work and educational opportunities; the workshops that teach English or parenting skills or basic computer use; or the chances it provides for many of us to meet like-minded neighbors through writing groups or book clubs or LEGO challenges or concerts and films, our Library is truly the heart of an ever-changing Schenectady County.

In 2017, the SCPL provided all of that to its patrons and more and I am proud to highlight a few of those achievements.

In February 2017, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Phyllis Bornt Library Branch and Literacy Center. Throughout its first year, the Bornt exceeded all expectations. Its success may be measured not only by tremendous circulation statistics and program attendance, including over a thousand new patrons who got their very first library cards, but also through the enthusiastic responses from the community it serves.

Building on the Bornt Branch's success, planning for a new Mont Pleasant branch library commenced in 2017. The Schenectady County Legislature showed tremendous support for the branch by committing a total of \$1,628,000 to its construction. The trustees added an additional \$1,026,583 in donations from the Trustees, the Friends of the Schenectady County Public Library and other private individual and foundation donors. The City IDA and the Land Bank contributed an additional \$480,589 in in-kind services and Metroplex also contributed to the project's successful launch. As its implementation gets underway, the Mont Pleasant branch project demonstrates a remarkable combination of public and private support.

Other capital projects were successfully completed at several branches, including carpet replacement at Niskayuna, Glenville and Scotia; a repaved parking lot at Woodlawn; and the installation of 60 computers.

The trustee's Planning Committee developed a framework for required Long Range Plan of Service progress reports and implemented this process with its committees. The Committee also initiated a working group of staff members to begin analyzing staffing gaps and efficiencies.

Thanks to the advocacy efforts of the trustees and the leadership of the Finance Committee, the SCPL's 2018 budget included funding for a Coordinator of Youth Services, a full time senior library clerk, as well as several of the Technology Plan's priorities. Thank you to the County for supporting these budgetary initiatives. The Finance Committee also initiated a budget planning process strategy that allowed the board to effectively communicate about its priorities, resulting in a timely and well-justified 2018 budget submission.

So thank you to all – our County Legislators, County Manager, the Friends of the SCPL and my fellow trustees – for the energy they bring to helping our talented and caring Library staff, led by Director, Karen Bradley, make all this excitement happen throughout all of our branches. Remembering Esther Swanker's tremendous legacy of service to the Schenectady County Public Library, we will continue to reflect on why we all do what we do for the Library and its patrons and continue to instill Esther's passion for the Library while we do so.

Sincerely,

*Carmel Patrick*

Carmel Patrick

President, Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees



## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

The mission of the Friends of the Schenectady County Public Library has always been to assist and support our library system in fulfilling its role as an essential institution dedicated to meeting the literacy, technology and cultural needs of all members of our community. Our Friends of the Library are one of the largest, most active Friends groups in New York State, with 1,188 members. The Friends operate the Whitney Book Corner, an online **Amazon** book store and several annual book sales, featuring books and DVDs donated by the community throughout the year. All the funds raised go back into our nine-branch library system to support educational, recreational, and cultural programs for community members of all ages, staff development and continuing education opportunities for library staff and library materials. Approximately \$106,000 in funds were invested by the Friends in our library system during 2017. In addition to the funds they raise to enhance our library system, they provide occasional programs, such as the **Noon Books Sandwiched In**, the **Beat the Snow** concert series, **Harry Potter Day**, **Great Decisions**, the annual **Poetry Gala** and literary trips, to name a few.



The Friends also underwrite the Museum and Cultural Pass Program which provides Schenectady County Public Library card-holding patrons with the opportunity to get reduced or free entrance fees into many outstanding historic and cultural venues in the region. This year, they added the **Springfield Museums**, including the **Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum** and the **Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden**. The Passes circulated 1,141 times in 2017. All you need is to be a Schenectady County resident with a library card in good standing!

**Volunteers are a valuable part of serving the public. In 2017 we logged in 13,662 hours by our library volunteers.**

## GRANTS & FUNDING



### NEW MONT PLEASANT BRANCH CONSTRUCTION

*Awarded by the Wright Family Foundation*

*Awarded by the Carlilian Foundation*

*Awarded by the Schenectady Foundation*

*Awarded by the Little Foundation*

*Awarded by Neil & Jane Golub*

*Awarded by Esther Swanker*

*Awarded by the Friends of the Library*

*Awarded by the SCPL Board of Trustees*



### ADULT LITERACY GRANT

*Awarded by the Mohawk Valley Library System*

### AUTHORS AMONG US

*Awarded by the Mohawk Valley Library System*

### NYS PUBLIC LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION GRANT

### miSci GRANT PARTNER





# SCPL

Schenectady County Public Library

## **Central Library**

99 Clinton Street  
518.388.4500

**Phyllis Bornt  
Branch Library  
& Literacy Center**  
948 State Street  
518.372.4393

**Glenville  
Branch Library**  
20 Glenridge Road  
518.386.2243

**Mont Pleasant  
Branch Library**  
1026 Crane Street  
518.386.2245

**Niskayuna  
Branch Library**  
2400 Nott Street East  
518.386.2249

**Quaker Street  
Branch Library**  
133 Bull Street, Delanson  
518.895.2719

**Rotterdam  
Branch Library**  
1100 N. Westcott Road  
518.356.3440

**Scotia  
Branch Library**  
14 Mohawk Avenue  
518.386.2247

**Woodlawn  
Branch Library**  
2 Sanford Street  
518.386.2248

[www.scpl.org](http://www.scpl.org)