



# SCPL

Schenectady County Public Library



## ANNUAL REPORT 2018



### **LIBRARIES = STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Our highlight for 2018 was the groundbreaking ceremony for the beginning of the construction of a new Mont Pleasant Branch Library - the beginning of putting the pleasant back in the Mont Pleasant community! We are grateful to the County for providing capital funds needed for the project, New York State Public Library Construction Grant, and donations provided by the library Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Library, the Schenectady Foundation, Wright Family Foundation, Little Foundation, Neil Jane Estelle Golub Family Foundation, and the Carlilian Foundation who all saw the value and impact that the Phyllis Bornt Branch Library had in our community. We look forward to late spring of 2019 for completion of this project.

**STARS to Brighten Literacy Landscape in the Community:** Nearly two years since inception, Schenectady Takes Action for Reading Success (STARS) experienced a year of achievement in 2018. Four action steps were taken toward the STARS goal of advancing and promoting the value of early literacy through collaborative initiatives with community partners. The first STARS bookshelf was installed at the WIC office on Franklin Street in downtown Schenectady in December. Thousands of WIC participants come through the waiting room monthly for appointments, and the STARS shelves are supplied with new, diverse, and developmentally appropriate books for parents/caregivers to give to their young children. Since the install, over 400 books have new homes with families. STARS has a waiting list of community organizations that also want shelves for their waiting rooms. Another success is that STARS generated a multicultural booklist for use by community partners to purchase books for their clients. It is crucial for children to see diverse and familiar characters in their literature, so culturally representative books are a key component. Third, the library was honored with a Community Partner Award by SiCM for STARS and other collaborative endeavors. Lastly, the STARS website launched in February 2018 and is an important communicative and resource tool for participants, educators, and families. Along with securing sustained funding, STARS is poised for more achievement in 2019, including installing more STARS shelves, building early literacy education into different family spaces, and working with the Emily Willey Foundation to enhance the work for literacy in the Mont Pleasant neighborhood. The Construction Trades Class at Washington Irving Educational Center has agreed to build a STARS book house for the Pleasant Valley Elementary School, to be installed in 2019.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



This year we launched our **Repair Café Schenectady** with the guidance of volunteer Dave West. This is an international initiative where people can bring nearly any variety of broken items to be repaired free of charge by a volunteer repair coach. The success of the program is noteworthy with nearly 200 people delighted with their repairs.

The 4th Annual **ELECTRIC CITY COMIC CON** was held, with 1,500 adults, teens and children attending. Some new additions to the event were food trucks, a new photo booth and live T-shirt printing. This family friendly event draws new patrons to the library every year. **HARRY POTTER DAY**, sponsored by the Friends of SCPL, got even more fun with a themed Escape Room for teens and adults who had to find their lost Hogwarts train ticket. The **Read n' Greet** book discussions continued to be held in local restaurants. Program staples of **Adult Coloring**, **Trivia Nights**, and **Hand Made Holidays** were popular. During National Library Week, patrons were invited to participate in a #Shelfie contest by taking a selfie in front of their favorite shelf in the library and posting it on the library's social media platforms. The contest created a lot of fun buzz online and resulted in many new Facebook and Instagram likes.

Writing and literary events held throughout the year bring a diverse group of mentors and presenters to the library for workshops. A sampling of those held this year are **Writing War Memoirs** with Susannah Risley; **Poetry Bootcamp and Fiction Writing** with Joan Kruger; **Collage and Writing** with Leslie Neustadt; and **Memoir Writing** with Paul Lamar. Robin Oliveira made a return visit to the library to discuss her newest book, **WINTER SISTERS**, which is set in Albany. Local author Ryan Smithson met with teen writers at the Niskayuna Branch library and later that evening discussed his new book, **10 KLICKS SOUTH OF WHISKEY**. Our literacy partnership with the Schenectady City School District continued with award winning young adult author Kwame Alexander presenting two wonderful programs to over a thousand students.

A wide variety of additional educational programs were held at Central and branches. **Money Matters** workshops held fall and spring series; tips on Buying and Selling a Home; learning about Valueline and Morningstar addressed financial literacy. Digital literacy classes continue monthly, from very basic classes to advanced classes as our community has a wide range of needs. Health literacy programs included Know the **Signs-Early Detection of Alzheimer's**; **Engage for Health with Ellis Medicine** and a **Smoke-Free Celebration**. In May, Schenectady County initiated **Schenectady Moves-A-Million** to promote healthy living, and the library participated by offering many yoga workshops and other opportunities to get up and move, from preschoolers to the senior members of our community.

**ONE COUNTY, ONE BOOK** was revitalized this year in a partnership with the Friends of SCPL and the Library Board of Trustees and. Co-chairs Chris Witkowski and Cheryl Cufari convened a committee of staff and community members to coordinate book nominations from across the county with over 300 titles nominated. Our community committee narrowed the nominations down to 25 and the reading began over the summer with four books announced in September for 8 weeks of voting. The winning book was Ta-Nehisi Coates book, **BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME**. Program planning began for the 2019 community read surrounding the themes of the book.

In the Youth Services department, creating opportunities for families to connect with the community and its resources continues to be a prominent mission. An increase in programs over the previous year also brought in new families who particularly appreciate the programs for very young children as well as young adults. Youth Services librarians participated in a wide variety of local and national literacy initiatives, including **Read for the Record**, **Take Your Child to the Library Day**, **National Library Week**, **Children's Book Week**, **Reading is Fun Reading Jamboree**, **Jay Street Kids' Art Festival** and many more. Following a national trend, the library emphasized STEM and STEAM programming for the after-school set. From coding to roller coaster construction to circuit card making to LEGO clubs, there is an abundance of opportunities for creative play and learning at our libraries.

A few noteworthy branch programs include **Baby Café**, held at the Bornt Branch, which continues to gain interest and attendance. The program provides free support for pregnant and nursing parents with experts from the Schenectady County Health Department. Also, the **4-H Club** is highly popular at Bornt, with 70 children and 23 teens attending programs during the year. This program is supported by Cornell Cooperative Extension.

**Summer Reading** was coordinated throughout branches, youth services and adult services to celebrate the theme **Libraries Rock**. With a return to a system of logging and rewarding the amount of time reading, there was more participation and enthusiasm. The partnership with the Schenectady City School District's Summer Enrichment program led to a 73% increase in paper registrations over last year and a 9% increase in programs. There was also a push to encourage more on line registrations through **Beanstack** and a resulting 20% increase there. Summer programs were held nearly every day throughout the summer. Some standouts were **Farmer Minor and Daisy the Library Pig**; **Sam Sam the Magic Man**; **Fishing in Collins Lake** and the miSci grant funded **Science in the Summer** classes.



## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

This year we wished two long time librarians a happy retirement. Cathy O'Connor was a veteran children's librarian at branches and most recently, the daily face in the Central Library's Children's Room. Robert Sullivan began his tenure at the library as a page in his teens, and retired as a reference librarian.

Youth services welcomed new librarian Julie Dahlie and library assistant Anne Skrebutenas.

Librarian Chinasa Seyse was a valued member of the 2019 American Library Association Caldecott Award Committee. She attended the 2018 Mid-Winter Conference as well as the ALA Annual Conference. The esteemed committee chose Sophie Blackall's **HELLO LIGHTHOUSE** as this year's winner. Julie Dahlie attended a training in Chicago for the ALA Great Stories Club grant we received, which was awarded to the library and partner Mont Pleasant Middle School. The book club allows participants to read and discuss books with a hero theme and topics such as sacrifice, justice and bravery. Paula Kurtzner was appointed part time library assistant in the Information Services Department. Librarian Leah LaFera partnered with City Mission to develop and present a program called Libraries as Bridges out of Poverty to MVLS and other area librarians. She also facilitated a new graduating class of Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World. Library Director Karen Bradley received the Distinguished Service Award from the Hudson Mohawk Library Association. Niskayuna Library Clerk, Courtney Chadwick earned two medals in swimming at the Special Olympics USA in Seattle, WA.



Every librarian and staff member attended professional development sessions and/or staff development training throughout the year thanks to the financial support provided by our Friends of the Library.

## INFORMATION SERVICES

Consistent new signage was created in our libraries to improve access to collections and an overall enhanced user experience. Collection development continues to be streamlined to ensure appropriate selection of materials for each location. Niskayuna, Rotterdam and Glenville now have Book Express collections for their patrons, offering current and high demand books for 7-day loan. Picture Book City labelling continues at branch libraries, which makes it easier for patrons to locate popular subjects for children in the large picture book collections. The library purchased additional popular learning devices called Launchpads. AWE early learning computer stations continue to be one of the favorite resources in the play spaces. Two new stations were purchased for the Rotterdam branch. World Book digital resources was added to the online database menu in April and is a valuable resource tool, particularly for youth.

## FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

Our Quaker Street branch was transformed with a redesign of space, a new circulation desk, new paint and carpet, and new furniture and display shelving. The result is a brighter, more inviting space for patrons and programs. Rotterdam and Niskayuna branches each received a new roof and some systems improvements. The Central Library received new sliding doors at the main entrances. Glenville's parking lot was repaved. Niskayuna's air conditioning system was replaced. The Scotia Library underwent a preliminary review and design for a projected program room addition.

Our Central Library also saw the installation of an Electric Vehicle Recharging Station in the parking lot that can accommodate up to four vehicles.



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES



When we broke ground for the new Mont Pleasant Library branch at a ceremony in May 2018, I spoke about collaboration. The Schenectady County Public Library had succeeded in exceeding its \$700,000 goal for this construction project. I was excited to announce that, thanks to a tremendous group of donors, we had raised \$1,026,583. The factor that helped us secure these contributions was that the concept of the Library being part of a larger collaboration – one which we called “The Corridor of Hope” – really resonated with the individuals and foundations we asked for support. They recognized that all of the exciting projects underway by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Schenectady, the Community Builders, the Electric City Barn, the Land Bank, Habitat for Humanity, and certainly Metroplex, the County and the City of Schenectady were absolutely going to have a strong community impact. We are all so proud that our Library – which already figures as the “heart of the neighborhood” – will be a part of this larger transformation of Mont Pleasant. The Mont Pleasant branch project is an excellent example of the power of collaboration. Its supporters not only contributed financially, they expressed their love of Schenectady, their admiration of the Library, and, frankly, their own high hopes for the youth, the seniors and the families who are all a part of our community.

Along with the progress made on constructing the new Mont Pleasant branch, I am delighted to highlight a few of the other 2018 achievements that trustees assisted with:

- The Building Committee worked with the County to successfully complete capital projects at several branches, including, among others, a renovation of the Quaker Street branch; roof replacement at Niskayuna and Rotterdam; paving at Glenville; completion of clean-ups of Central’s second floor and the computer room; and a review and design for an addition to the Scotia branch.
- The Planning Committee continued monitoring progress in meeting the goals of the long-range plan. An analysis of branch hours and staffing needs was initiated, along with a re-evaluation of the priorities included in the technology replacement plan. Both of these ongoing efforts will help us identify future budget and planning priorities.
- The Branch Committee held several productive meetings throughout the year, and facilitated discussions that provided us with our patrons’ views of the need for improvements to computer and safety technologies. As a result, computer upgrades and installation of additional security equipment were completed at several branches.
- The Finance Committee’s budget planning process allowed time for the board to effectively communicate about its priorities. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of the trustees, we were approved for three capital improvement projects in the 2019 SCPL budget. Thank you to Schenectady County for supporting these budgetary initiatives.

Thank you to our County Legislators, County Manager, the Friends of the SCPL, and my fellow trustees – for the energy they bring to collaborating with our talented and caring Library staff, led by Director, Karen Bradley. Together, we are honored to make things happen throughout all of our branches.

Sincerely,

*Carmel Patrick*

Carmel Patrick  
President  
Schenectady County Public Library  
Board of Trustees





## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

In addition to the support our library system receives from our Schenectady County Legislature, our SCPL Friends of the Library make an immeasurable contribution to our library through their countless volunteer hours planning many Friends initiated programs – **Books Sandwiched In**, **Harry Potter Day**, the annual **Poetry Gala**, **Beat the Snow Winter Concert Series**, the **Museum Pass Program**, and **Great Decisions** series, to name a few. A huge initiative in 2018 was the reinstatement of our **ONE COUNTY, ONE BOOK** program, led by the Friends which holds great promise for exciting programming in 2019. Each year a one day bus trip and an international excursion are planned, such as 2018's trip to Ireland.

The daily volunteer efforts of their book sorters enables the Whitney Book Corner, their online Amazon book store, and two large scale book sales, one in the spring and one in the fall, to bring in over \$100,000 in funds to support all of our programs, staff development, and investments in our new libraries such as the Bornt branch and the upcoming Mont Pleasant library. New digital display signage was added this fall in the lobby of the Central Library. The Friends of SCPL were nominated and received an award from the Schenectady County Human Rights Commission.

The Friends are always in need of volunteers, from the annual book sales, to book sorting, and shifts at the Whitney Book Corner. The end of year highlight was the planning of a second used book store at the Rotterdam VIA|PORT Mall thanks to the vision and hard work by Friends volunteers Charlene Roman, Robin Eddy, and many others!



## GRANTS & AWARDS



### ADULT LITERACY GRANT

*Awarded by the Mohawk Valley Library System*

### ALA GREAT STORIES Grant

### miSci GRANT PARTNER

### NYSCA AUTHORS AMONG US Grant

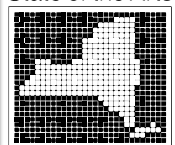
*Awarded by the Mohawk Valley Library System*

### SICM COMMUNITY PARTNERS AWARD

### NYS PUBLIC LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION GRANT



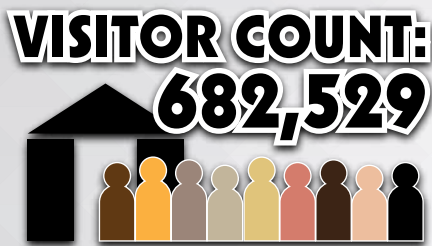
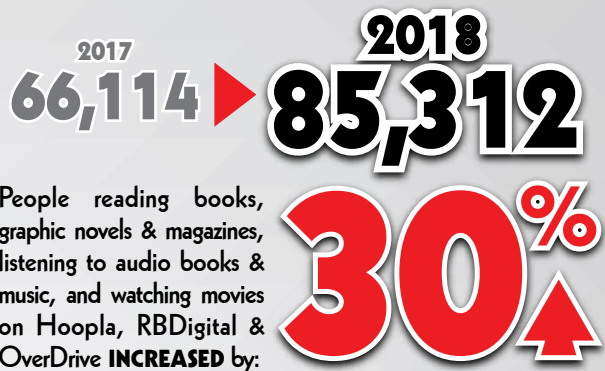
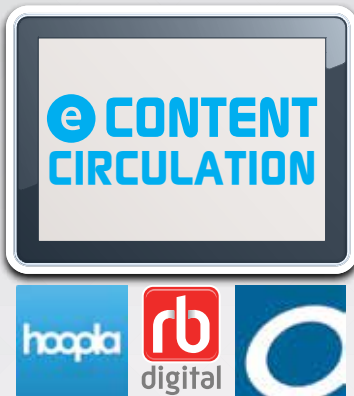
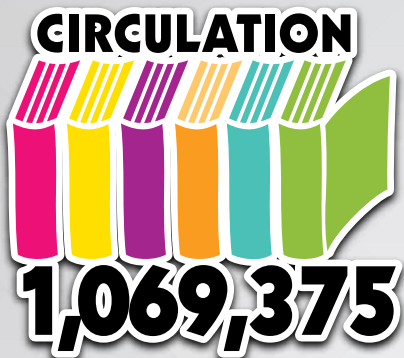
State of the Arts



NYSCA



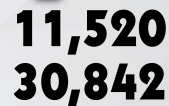
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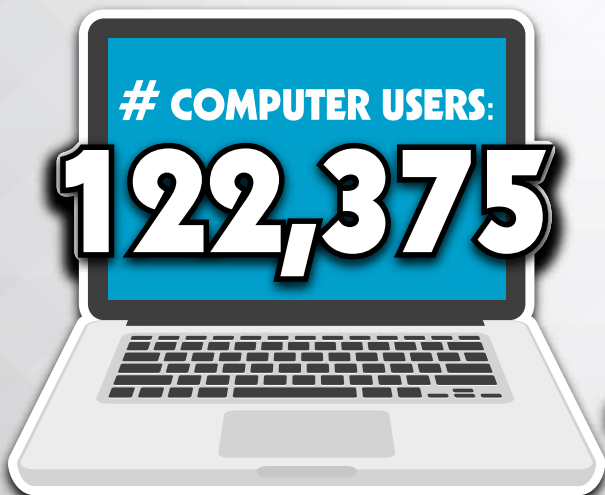
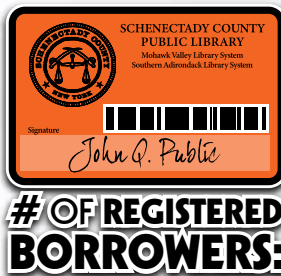
**# OF PROGRAMS:** **# OF ATTENDEES:**



**ADULTS**  
**CHILDREN'S**



**INCREASES OVER 2017**



The digital divide that exists within the County was made evident this past year with the increase in the number of computer users throughout our nine Library locations of over:



\*COMBINED FROM ALL 9 SCPL LOCATIONS.

# OUR STORY





# 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)