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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **'Library Insiders' Provides Programming Specially for Adults with Developmental Disabilities**

*ELMHURST, IL* — Surveying a roomful of baking enthusiasts at Elmhurst Public Library, Tom Morissette has been given the task of judging pies created during an afternoon program called Iron Chef. Tom, by his own admission, prefers salad over sweets, but he takes his job seriously. He shakes the hand of each participant, and carefully studies each creation before deciding on the score: two thumbs up. In the back row, a young man looks down at his empty pie plate, a telltale dab of whipped cream at the corner of his mouth. He shrugs and gives a winning smile. "My tummy is happy," he laughs.

Programs like this and others are part of the Library Insiders, an ongoing series of programming designed specially for adults with developmental disabilities.

Earlier this year, Elmhurst Public Library launched the Next Chapter Book Club, part of a national organization of the same name. Library staff received special training from Ups for Downs, a volunteer parent organization in Schaumburg, to facilitate the twice-monthly meetings aimed toward maintaining literacy skills for adults with developmental disabilities, particularly those who are aging out of the school system.

"Oftentimes when you're the parent or have a disability, you isolate yourself, because you don't feel that the programs are for you," says Outreach Librarian Kristin Sanderson.

“We’re a community Library,” continues Sanderson. “Part of our mission is to give all members of our community access to connecting with other people, creating things, and exploring new ideas.”

Patricia Yaeger, Morissette’s cousin, says the new variety of programming makes the Library even more of a favorite place to go. “Tom is often attracted to activities designed for school-age children, which might not necessarily be appropriate,” she says. “Programs like [the Library Insiders] make Tom feel even more excited about coming to the Library. It’s nice to be at a program designed for him.”

High school age or adult volunteers can be a Library Buddy, a program that matches volunteers with adults with developmental disabilities so they can attend programs together.

Kim Calkins, adult programming coordinator at Elmhurst Library says the Library Insiders programs have been the highlight of her year. “It’s been absolute joy,” she says. “It’s great to invite this underserved community into our Library to participate. And it’s great to pair the typically-abled volunteers with the developmentally disabled and see those relationships grow.”

Yeager agrees. “Tom is very social,” she says. “He loves meeting new people. The Library Insiders programming gives him the opportunity to connect with others outside his usual circle of family and friends, and I think most people he meets feel better about their day after just a few minutes talking with Tom. He has a way of spreading joy wherever he goes.”

Outreach Librarian Kristin Sanderson is available to answer questions and provide more information about the Library Insiders programs, events, and volunteer opportunities. Contact her at [kristin.sanderson@elmhurst.org](mailto:kristin.sanderson@elmhurst.org) or (630) 279-8696. For upcoming events, visit [elmlib.org/libraryinsiders](http://elmlib.org/libraryinsiders).

Elmhurst Public Library enriches life in Elmhurst by providing opportunities to connect, create, and explore. EPL provides the support, resources, and environment for Elmhurst patrons to: pursue a love of reading; access information; explore interests; engage with technology; connect with others; and create and innovate. Elmhurst Public Library is the place for discovery at the heart of the community.

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[SIDEBAR]

Upcoming Library Insiders programs at Elmhurst Public Library:

Library Insiders Creative Wishes Workshop

Monday, October 17 • 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Join registered art therapist Julie Ludwick as she leads us in a “wish stick” making workshop. Reflect on and cultivate your wishes by making your own piece of art, which may be displayed at the Library. Participants who wish to have their work displayed will be given a waiver to be signed by themselves or a legal guardian. Register online, in person, or by phone.

Library Insiders: Scambusters!

Tuesday, Nov. 15 • 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Learn to recognize and avoid common holiday-themed scams online, in email, over the phone, and door-to-door. Register online, in person, or by phone.

The Next Chapter Book Club

Wednesdays, Oct. 19, Nov. 2, 16, and 30 • 6:30-7:30 p.m.

The Next Chapter Book Club is a literacy program for adults with developmental disabilities. Anyone can join, regardless of reading ability.

[PHOTO CAPTIONS]

(DSC\_0745.JPG) Kristin Sanderson, Outreach Librarian (left), and Tom Morissette shakes the hand of each participant before judging pies created at a Library Insiders event at Elmhurst Public Library. The Library Insiders programs are specially designed for adults with developmental disabilities.

(DSC\_0739.JPG) Getting just the right combination of ingredients is crucial to pie making. Kim Calkins, EPL’s programming coordinator, passes samples around during a Library Insiders program, designed specifically for adults with developmental disabilities.