



COURTESY OF ELMHURST PUBLIC LIBRARY

Katie Stringwell, an early literacy librarian, puts on a virtual storytime for Elmhurst Public Library's youngest patrons.

Elmhurst Library builds Community Connections

Elmhurst Public Library

In 2020, Elmhurst Public Library proudly announced its designation as a five-star library for the fourth year in a row. The five-star rating is the highest honor bestowed by Library Journal, and Elmhurst has the distinction of being one of only seven five-star libraries in Illinois. This success put a positive spin at the end of an unusual year for the library.

Online programs

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Elmhurst Public Library quickly pivoted in response to stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines. In the interest of public safety, the library replaced in-person programming with a wide variety of online programs. By offering programs live on Zoom, folks are able to enjoy what the library has to offer from the comfort of their homes without any difficulty finding a parking spot.

Expanded digital collections

With a heightened demand for digital materials, the library expanded its digital collections, making the library's digital content more accessible to patrons who are at home. Patrons are allowed more views, checkouts and holds on digital services like Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy, Freegal and Creativebug.

Community Connection

During a year when fostering connection with others felt more important than ever to combat feelings of isolation, the library introduced Community Connection. Events like Family Scavenger Hunts, Write to the Dogs and Earth Day recycling collections were designed to get families and individuals engaged in activities that bring positivity to others in our community.

Continuing on into 2021, the

library's Community Connection events will include a Kids' Virtual Art Show, a collection of Earth Day-inspired verse for a "PoeTree" Project, and Spring Family Bingo.

Virtual meeting spaces

Because the library's meeting rooms were unavailable during the height of the pandemic, the library began hosting virtual meeting rooms. Users reserve virtual spaces up to a month in advance. On the day of the appointment, patrons visit the library's virtual reference desk; from there, a friendly staff member assigns a private virtual breakout room. These rooms make a great option for book clubs or other small groups who wanted to meet virtually, but don't feel comfortable setting up virtual meetings.

Puzzle Swap

Starting in the cold months of winter, community members were invited to trade in gently used puzzles and leave with new-to-them puzzles from a Puzzle Swap table in the library lobby. The rotating supply of colorful puzzles has proved to be so popular that the swap will continue through May.

Media Match services

The library debuted two new and modern ways to provide the classic library service of reading recommendations with Media Match and Media Match Jr. Both services start with an online questionnaire that pairs people with an expert library selector who helps find their next best item to listen to, read or watch.

The year 2020 has illustrated the importance of being able to shift plans on short notice, then readjust over and over as new information becomes available; the library is grateful for the community's support and flexibility as we navigated through 2020.