A Message From the President

Happy Spring!

Happy Spring! This is the time of year where we usually look back on Advocacy Day. The bus rides with Yancey. The screaming in the Well. The NYLA Swag. The hugs from colleagues around the state. The face time with our officials. Showing new advocates around the capitol building. The snacks. The naps on the ride home.

However, the virtual landscape made it easier for us to connect with our representatives without having to leave our homes or workplaces. Advocating for library services is not something to just be done seasonally and, even though it’s been a frustrating year, it has led to new avenues of library advocacy that can be done year round, in your pajamas, with fuzzy slippers and a nice top with a professional background.

As great as it is to connect wherever you are, the hybrid work-life culture we are creating wreaks havoc on our minds and bodies. We are forming new habits that conflict with old structure, or possibly, there wasn’t even a structure to begin with. We are trying to build some sense of normalcy while working in a silo. Hopefully you are able to find some solace in a good book, a loved one, a game, etc. I know for me, my therapist and chiropractor have been working overtime, as well as the button on my pants when I have to leave the house. Needless to
say, I’m very happy with the abundance of fashionable dress pants that feel like pajama pants options!

It’s easy to go down the spiral of feeling inadequate, looking for comfort in blogs like LIS Grievances. Sure you can anonymously complain about your work, but what good is that really doing? How do you actually make a change for the good of the whole? While you can’t always fix what’s right in front of you, NYLA does have some opportunities to work together on systemic change. Not only do we have two new task forces to address change, but we have opportunities, right in our NYLA-YSS Section! I hope some of ya’ll will consider a position on the YSS Board. It’s been a wonderful opportunity not only professionally, but personally. The folks I’ve had the honor of serving with through this crazyclusterfuckeryhotmesscrapshoot of a time, have been a lifeline to the profession I started to question.

I’m super excited for the #bestyssconferenceever, Futureproof Libraries: Relevance and Resilience in Challenging Times. It’s been a long time coming and I’m optimistic for what the future will bring.

“See” you on March 26th!

NYLA-YSS Pandemic President,
Amanda Schiavulli

YSS Fall Board Meeting
(top row): Amanda Schiavulli, Jennifer Burke, Lisa Neuman
(middle row): Chinasa Seyse, YSS Yancey Logo, and Ashley Bressingham
(bottom row): Elissa Valente, Chrissie Morrison, and Angela Newman
Hey, you! Yes, you. YSS would love your help! If you’re looking for a way to get involved, meet new people, and help YOUR YSS, consider joining a committee. I got started in YSS serving on Empire State Award Committee, and it was a fantastic experience! When you join a committee, you make a three-year time commitment. You will learn and help out during your first year, become committee chair for your second year, and mentor the newer members of the committee during your third year. Terms for this year’s incoming committee members will run from the NYLA Annual Conference 2021 (November 3-6 in Syracuse) through the 2024 NYLA Annual Conference. We have positions available on these committees:

**Fall Conference Curation Committee**
Coordinates/plans the YSS events and workshops for the NYLA Annual Conference.

**Empire State Award Committee**
Selects the ESA winner from YSS member nominations; plans the ESA luncheon for NYLA Annual Conference.

**Pied Piper Award Committee**
Responsible for advertising, collecting submissions, and selecting a winning library from submissions in library programming excellence.

**Marketing Committee**
Explores online and print options of initiatives to support the YSS members and generate revenue. This committee maintains YSS social media and assures YSS is actively communicating with our membership.

**Scholarship Committee**
Responsible for marketing, collecting submissions, and selecting winners for the Spring Conference Scholarships and the Ann Gibson Scholarship.

**Communications Committee Liaison**
The Communications Committee serves to increase communication and ensure the accuracy of all distributed information and to provide for continuity across units. The YSS Liaison provides a link between the committee and the YSS board, communicating pertinent information to both parties.

If you would like more information, or to be considered for one of these positions, email Jenny Burke at jennifer.lynn.burke@gmail.com by May 1, 2021. Please include your contact information and the committee(s) in which you are interested. If you’d like to help in other ways, please fill out the YSS Active Member Form. Please keep in mind: The YSS Board approves committee member nominations annually.

Jennifer Burke  
1st Vice President

**Active Member Form Link:** [https://form.jotform.com/62577808080159](https://form.jotform.com/62577808080159)
YSS Spring Conference - Registration Open!

The YSS Spring Conference - Futureproof Libraries: Relevance and Resilience in Challenging Times - is only a few short weeks away!

Join us on Friday, March 26 from the place in your life with the very best wi-fi for our all-virtual conference. As our morning keynote, Lisa Kropp and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich of the New York Library Association’s Sustainability Initiative will translate lessons learned through their work to help libraries be recognized as community leaders in co-creating more equitable and resilient communities, to help library leaders be more resilient themselves. Our author keynote is Ellen Oh of We Need Diverse Books, and we’ve got workshop sessions from your fellow youth services librarians and partners from around the state. Want more details? Find the full program slate here.

The cost for 2021 is $70, and the deadline for registration is Friday, March 19.

Those who already signed up for the 2020 conference can take advantage of the new, lower rate by adding a second attendee to their registration. Just have the second person register, enter the promo code YSSBUDDY, and then include in the notes field whose registration they are sharing. Simple!

Service Project

One thing that hasn't changed about the YSS Spring Conference is our service project - we're still calling on conference attendees to donate handmade blankets to Project Linus, a non-profit organization that provides handmade blankets to children and teens who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need of security, warmth, and comfort. But instead of bringing your finished projects to the conference, you can reach out to your local chapter for guidance on how and where to safely drop off your project in your own area. And don't forget to post a picture of your finished project to your favorite social media platform and tag YSS! We're on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Angela Newman
2021 Spring Conference Director
Save the Date for the 2021 NYLA Annual Conference

Join us in Syracuse, November 3rd-6th for the NYLA 2021 Conference: “Libraries: We’re ALL In”. Though much of the conference is still being planned and we haven’t officially decided on all of our programming yet (at least, not as I’m writing this article), we have a tremendous amount of fantastic program submissions to choose from. Prioritizing youth engagement during a pandemic; community partnerships; promoting social justice; and virtual programming are just a few of the topics submitted for consideration.

We still have a few spots open for Table Talk presentations. Table Talks are 15 minute presentations on a variety of Youth Services topics-such as programming, Summer Reading Activities, and more- from Early Literacy to Teens. If you have a presentation or program you think would work well as a Table Talk, please email me with your program and library information at relyeaa@thetroylibrary.org.

Hope to see you there!

Amy Relyea
YSS Fall Conference Curator

Ann Gibson Scholarship

This scholarship is given annually to honor the memory of Ann Gibson, a dynamic and dedicated librarian, storyteller, and teacher, in recognition of her many contributions to the field of youth service librarianship. Ann’s career in Western New York was spent in public libraries and several colleges and universities.

As a founding member of the Genesee Story-tellers, Gibson provided in-service training in children’s literature for librarians and teachers. She was a guiding force in the University of Rochester’s annual storytelling conference. Ann was also an active volunteer for local charities involving children with special needs.

The Ann Gibson Scholarship is a memorial to Ann’s passionate abilities to share her love of children’s literature and the art of storytelling with thousands of children and adults. Its purpose is to provide financial assistance to a person who has chosen to pursue graduate studies that will lead to New York State certification as a youth specialist in a public library or school media center.

Deadline for applications: Monday, May 31, 2021
Amount: $1,000

For more information about award qualifications, judging criteria, and applications, please see the Ann Gibson Scholarship page on the NYLA YSS website. If you have any questions contact Jennifer Caccavale at Jennifer.Caccavale@libraryweb.org.

Jennifer Caccavale
YSS Scholarship Committee Chair
Empire State Award

The Empire State Award (ESA) has been awarded annually since 1990 and is almost ready to announce its 2021 winner! The awardee is selected from a pool of nominees from you, YSS members, and presents at the annual conference. We’ll be announcing the 2021 Empire State Award winner at the virtual YSS Conference on Friday, March 26th.

Can you predict who will win this year’s award? Take a guess!

This year’s winner will be the latest awardee among literature superstars such as last year’s winner, Rita Williams Garcia and past winners like Linda Sue Park and Vera B. Williams. This year’s winner is scheduled to speak at the award luncheon on Friday, November 6, 2021 in Syracuse, NY.

Any active YSS member can use this form to nominate a youth author or illustrator living in New York State! We deeply value your input and rely on our members to contribute to building a robust pool of nominations.

If you’re interested in seeing a list of all ESA winners or are seeking additional information, please visit the ESA page of the NYLA website.

Alexandria Abenshon
Empire State Award Committee Chair
YSS Marketing Committee

It’s almost hard to believe that Summer Reading is once again right around the corner! The Marketing Committee has been working hard to ensure that our members stay up-to-date on all YSS news, announcements, trends, and inspiring topics through our social media channels! If you don’t already, be sure to follow YSS NYLA on Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

With your help, our goal is to make YSS’s social media pages more interactive, fun, and engaging, and to showcase what our members are doing around the state. As Summer Reading approaches, we’d love to see what your library has planned! Please tag us in your library’s photos of programs, book displays, and more using @YSSNYLA or email them to committee chair, Lindsay at jankovitzl@gmail.com.
New York State Library Updates

Looking ahead to Summer Reading 2021: Libraries have begun their planning for Summer Reading and Tails and Tales, but we know the uncertainty of the continuing pandemic means programs may be in person or virtual or both. But whatever format libraries use, we know they are up to the challenge and will offer exciting and educational learning opportunities for kids and students of all ages this summer.

Don’t forget to reach out to the schools and school libraries in your area to start collaborating now on Summer Reading. Schools that partner with their local public library can get access to many of the Collaborative Summer Library Program/CSLP resources on the CSLP site, including graphics and artwork to help them promote Summer Reading to their students. Want to see some tips for working with schools in your area? There are handy tutorials from CSLP on the Summer Reading site at http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/resource.htm

Announcing a NEW logo for Summer Reading at New York Libraries!
In late 2020, the State Library was fortunate to work with one of the graphic designers in the New York State Museum, on creating a new and updated logo for the Summer Reading program. We hope you like this new look and color scheme. Please remind all libraries that they should “retire” the old logo (Statue of Liberty with sunglasses) and start using the new logo on all materials they are creating for Summer Reading 2021. Incorporate the new logo into library web pages, handouts, bookmarks and other outreach materials too. Information on the new Summer Reading logo formats and a helpful style guide can be found here: http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/srlogos.htm

READsquared has already incorporated the new logo into their program materials for Summer 2021. Has your library signed up for the FREE READsquared Summer Reading software? Libraries can take advantage of READsquared onboarding training and refresher sessions by going to https://www.summerreadingnys.org/readsquared/ for dates and more information.

The State Library is planning some “lunch and learn” sessions on a variety of Summer Reading related topics, so stay tuned for more information. They will be announced via the NYLINE list, so be sure to sign up for NYLINE at http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/nyline.htm so you don’t miss out!

Transforming Teen Services: The NY State training team for the YALSA Transforming Teen Services/T3 initiative will be presenting an overview session at the virtual YSS Spring Conference on March 26. We hope you will register for this great conference and attend the T3 session to learn more about the training and how it will benefit your library! More T3 trainings are being planned for 2021. See the T3 landing page for updated information and dates of future trainings: http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/youthsvs/t3/index.html

Performers and Programs database reminder: The New York State Performers & Programs Database brings together performer and program related information to help libraries all over NY State locate potential program offerings for Summer and year-round! It's a great searchable resource that features educational and entertaining youth programs and contact information to help libraries plan events and activities. There’s now a category for virtual programs too. Has your library booked a program that was especially entertaining or
Summer Meals program: While we don’t know exactly what summer 2021 will look like, we know that kids and teens will need access to nutritious meals and snacks when school is not in session. State administering agencies for the Summer Food Service Program will soon be distributing more information on how libraries can participate as sites or help with outreach. Find information about Summer Meals and upcoming information sessions on the Hunger Solutions NY partner page at https://www.summerreadingnys.org/hunger-solutions/

Ready to Read at New York Libraries: Did you know that Ready to Read sponsors at least 3 free early literacy webinars each year? Any library staff working with young children and families or who have an interest in early literacy topics can register and attend. Watch for NYLINE messages to learn more about upcoming offerings and how to register. Or to see what new webinars are being planned and view previous webinars, go to http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/earlylit/webinars.htm

Supercharged Storytimes training: The State Library is planning some spring and fall offerings of this popular training and will be sharing information as soon as dates are confirmed with the SSA trainers. Stay tuned for more information coming soon on NYLINE. Training and registration information will also be posted on the SSA landing page when available: http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/earlylit/ssa/index.html

DayByDayNY in Spanish: Please be aware of this important information regarding the Spanish version of the DayByDayNY site at http://daybydaynysp.org/. This site is being discontinued at the end of March 2021, so please be sure to remove any links to the Spanish version of the site that you may have on library handouts, web sites, or other outreach materials. The English version of the DayByDayNY site and the One More Story resource will still be available and will not be affected by this change.

There have been a number of recent Youth Services staffing changes at various systems, and the State Library wants to make sure libraries are aware that we provide an up-to-date roster on the Division of Library Development website! Please be sure to check this roster page if you’re not sure who the Youth Services contact is for your region or system, or you need to get in touch with them. We've also added a new link for a downloadable, printer-friendly pdf of the roster on the DLD Youth Services page: http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/youthsvs/roster.htm

QUESTIONS about Youth Services programs at the New York State Library? Send questions or comments to nyslyouth@nysed.gov

Sharon Phillips
NYS Library Liaison
Apply for the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship

Are you a member of a Friends of the Library group? Do you serve as the Staff Liaison to your library’s Friends group? Do you have a stellar Friends group at your library that supports youth services? Could one of the Friends volunteers benefit from a professional development opportunity at the NYLA Annual Conference?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you’ll want to check out the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship this year. Established in 2018, this award is named in honor of YSS Past President Randall Enos, who is also the President Emeritus of NYLA’s Friends of Libraries Section (FLS). The scholarship provides financial assistance for an FLS member to attend a NYLA Annual Conference. (Not a member of FLS? You can add FLS to your NYLA membership for just $10.)

Whether a library civic leader, a community volunteer that chairs a Friends fundraiser, or a library staff member, the applicant must be currently and actively involved in a local Friends group at any type of library in New York State. Applicants for the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship must be personal members of FLS/NYLA or registered with NYLA as the primary contact or an elected officer of a Friends group that is a current organizational member of FLS/NYLA. Members of the FLS Executive Board or student members of NYLA are not eligible to apply. Individuals may only receive one FLS scholarship or Dewey Fellowship from FLS in their lifetime.

The recipients of the Enos Scholarship will be chosen on the basis of a personal letter outlining why they wish to attend the NYLA Annual Conference plus a letter of recommendation from the library director or an officer or committee chair of their Friends group. The application asks for statements of accomplishments as a Friends member, library and community volunteer experience, and personal contributions to the library community. Two scholarships will be awarded; one to an individual who has not previously attended a NYLA Annual Conference and one to someone who may, or may not, have attended previously.

The FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship will pay a maximum of $750 of the cost for each of two recipients to attend the 2021 NYLA Annual Conference scheduled for Syracuse from Wednesday, November 3 through Saturday, November 6. Reimbursements include: registration, tickets for events and various meal functions, lodging, and travel.

The scholarships are underwritten through an endowment funded from contributions to FLS on the occasion of Randy’s retirement from the Ramapo Catskill Library System. For those wishing to make a donation, a form is available on the FLS webpage: https://www.nyla.org/FLS-awards-scholarships/?menukey=fls.

Completed applications must be received before 5 p.m. on Tuesday, June 1, 2021. Please see the FLS webpage to download an application. The application form along with any accompanying documentation should be submitted to by e-mail to Anne Andrianos, FLS Scholarship Coordinator: anne.andrianos@gmail.com.

As an alternate option, three copies of the completed form along with three sets of any supporting materials may be submitted by mail to Anne Andrianos, 4340 Young Road, Syracuse, NY 13215. Applications should be submitted in one format only (electronic or paper).
Any questions about the award may be directed to Anne at this e-mail address or by telephone: (315) 382-4768. The Enos Conference Scholarship Committee will review all eligible applications and notify applicants of the final results in late summer.

Lisa C. Wemett
Immediate Past President of FLS/NYLA

Sustainable Summer Reading

When I was first asked to write an article on sustainable summer reading, I thought “piece of cake”. Then, I sort of freaked out – internally – because I’m not in Youth Services anymore, “what could I possibly tell these wonderful, amazing people what they don’t already know?!?” Finally, I slapped myself out of my fearful thoughts, and decided to just encourage all of you to keep doing what you’re doing but tie it in with the “three-legged stool” we know, and love, as the Venn Diagram of sustainability.

First introduced to me by the great Rebekkah Smith Aldrich and further defined by the beautiful hive mind of the NYLA Sustainability Initiative and RSA’s co-chair, Matthew Bollerman, the Triple Bottom Line of sustainable thinking is made up of three principles – Is it Environmentally Sound? Is it Economically Feasible? Is it Socially Equitable? Whatever your “it” is, by applying all three at your library and within your community, you are acting sustainably!

As you begin the crazy ride to this year’s summer reading program, keep these values in mind. When you purchase items for programs or prizes, look for items which are environmentally friendly. In a 2018 article for the Newsletter of the NYLA SI (v. 2, issue 4) the following was suggested for those trying to make a difference:

Purchase items for summer reading that are either reusable or biodegradable. For example, reusable bags to distribute summer reading kits; reusable water bottles (metal not plastic); seeds and planting pots in biodegradable pots that can be planted right in the ground or in other reusable contains like ceramic and metal; pet rocks (no throwing in the library!); tokens or gift certificates from local businesses like an ice cream parlor or pizza shops; die cut bookmarks made out of recyclable paper or cardboard rather than plastic.

The year prior, when we were all trying to Build a Better World, the May 2017 newsletter showed suggestions coming in from all over NYS. While I can’t show all of them in this article, I can highlight for you the common theme of community partnerships. Partnerships with local businesses and community organizations, especially those already supporting one-to-all-three of the principles, will benefit your library and community.

From community agencies, like the Salvation Army or Boys & Girls Club, to local businesses, they not only have an active interest in participating in your summer reading program, but they may also have suggestions for reading prizes which incorporate their business. Visit businesses and ask if they would like to participate by donating supplies or offering coupons as prizes. During the 2020 summer reading program, a local café owner was so thrilled to get some exposure for her business, she gave us (at Liverpool Public Library) a $50 gift card for a grand prize!

Talk to your local school librarian or teachers and ask if they’d consider partnering with you to give out “No Homework” passes as completion prizes. Other summer reading partnerships with schools could include program collaborations, food donations (are they a free lunch location?), or potential prizes for schools with the most students participating in your summer reading program.

There are A LOT of swag businesses out there with eco-friendly marketing material – pencils, bags, flash drives, etc. If you go this route, see if there’s a local supplier so you can support local businesses, and make a lifelong library friend! Try to avoid those bulk wholesalers with a penchant for plastic. Additionally, if you spend too much for too little, is that economical for you or your budget?

I could play devil’s advocate to queries regarding sustainable prizes and programs all day, but at the end of the day, you know what is best for your community. You are already practicing sustainability every day, if you remember the Library Core Values. We flex all of these when we’re encouraging our community to read, interact, and support each other. There is so much sustainable potential in your summer reading story. I can’t wait to hear your Tales from 2021.

B. Maggie Foster
aka “The Loud Librarian”
OurStoryBridge: Connecting the Past and the Present

On Friday, March 26 at the YSS Spring Conference, Jery Y Huntley, MLS, on behalf of the Keene Valley Library, will be talking about three, new, interrelated projects sponsored by the library and lauded by librarians, school library media specialists, and teachers across New York State and the nation. Although they are described below, we are hoping you will attend to get the full impact of the projects.

Adirondack Community, at www.myadirondackstory.org, is a multi-year local history project that collects and organizes 3- to 5-minute audio stories and related photographs from town of Keene community members. This online platform shares the rich social and cultural history of this community located in the Adirondack Mountains. The 180 stories and 9 podcasts have relevance beyond the community’s borders, in any classroom.

OurStoryBridge, at www.ourstorybridge.org, is a free resource and tool kit for producing a crowdsourced, community story project and is designed to help libraries and other organizations create their own story projects using Adirondack Community as a model. Through initial presentations since release in September 2020, 450 librarians from 45 states chose to learn about the project and several have already begun planning their local story projects. The free online Tool Kit contains a User Guide (already downloaded over 125 times) which includes everything a community needs to know to start a story project, plus How-To Videos, Sample Documents, the Teachers Guide.

The Teacher’s Guide on both websites consists of the How To document outlining how to use the stories for lessons in any school in any community; the Story Selection Chart, a tool to match stories with specific high school courses; the Story Summaries, brief synopses of the 180 stories currently available; and the Sample School Assignment. By using the stories you can engage younger generations in the hope that they learn about their community and become proud citizens.

Wonder what we mean by stories? Follow this link for a selection that we hope will inspire you to hear more about the projects on March 26: https://www.myadirondackstory.org/teacher-s-guide
Community Club: Adams Free Library

The Adams Library Community Club began after a team of students aged out of Battle of the Books, a reading competition for 4 to 6th graders, and in coordination with the Adams Librarian they created the Clash of the Readers Competition for 7 to 9th graders. The four founding leaders were South Jefferson students Gavin Stone, Rylie Wilson, Kate Banazek and Thomas King.

When kids entered the 7th grade there were no reading competition programs available in our area. The team contacted local librarians, schools, and even Battle of the Books programs in Syracuse. Either there was not a program, or they could not join since they were not living in their service area. The kids spoke to the Adams Librarian and to the South Jefferson English Teachers and Clash of the Readers was formed. The Club was able to locate sponsors for their event including Pearls Pastry Shoppe, Kinney Drugs, Stewart’s, and Ramsey’s Pizza.

The Club felt there are numerous competitions for athletes offered via our schools and community, but not many competitions for talented readers aged 7th grade plus. The reading competition inspires kids to read outside of their normal genre and to have fun. Over time, the Club expanded in both numbers and responsibilities, and now runs a Club focused on bringing community service to the Adams Free Library.

The Club hopes to help Samantha Morgan (Adams Free Library Director) expand the Library into a community center to entice tween/teenage groups and facilitate educational and STEM activity in a fun atmosphere. The Club has already helped organize three years of successful Clash of Readers competitions, Battle of the Books Competition (even virtually through COVID), delivered books to at risk patrons, helped make videos for the Adams Free Library YouTube channel with Story Time and informational videos, helped clean the library, and more. They hope to help the Adams Library Director to expand a tween/teen area with more programs such as a Rubik Cube Club, Chess Club, Creative Writing Course, Short Story Competition, and also continue Clash and Battle competitions.

Samantha Morgan
Director, Adams Free Library
My name is Tara Montoney and I am quite proud to be the Youth Services Coordinator for the Seneca Falls Library in Seneca Falls, NY. I have been fortunate to have this dreamy job for 10 years! When I took the position, the only consistent programming our library offered was a weekly storytime. I made it my mission to implement lots of fun, new programming that would show kids how much fun libraries can be and to keep the families coming back for more! One of these programs is known as Cook-a-Book. And, do you know who originally gave me the idea of this amazing program...your very own YSS President, Amanda Schiavulli!!

I loved the idea of the program immediately - I mean, it’s stories and snacks on a particular theme - what’s not to love? And the name, Cook-a-Book, is super fun to say and enticing to kids! When we started this program 8 years ago, I remember having to explain to kids that we were not actually going to COOK books because that would be crazy! We have even adapted this program to do in schools (pre-pandemic) during after-school clubs!

Cook-a-Book is simple to plan and execute, and as I have found out this year, is easily adaptable to different audiences and platforms! When we ran this program in person, I typically did it every other month, just to keep our costs down. Although, it’s worth noting that I’ve had very good luck getting this program grant-funded. You can choose any theme/topic you like; holidays, seasons, animals, book characters, etc. I usually choose 2 stories on the theme and then find 1 or 2 easy snack recipes that kids can make on their own. I like to print out the recipes for the kids to take home so they can recreate the snack if they want (and more literacy- bonus!). The most recent Cook-a-Book program that I did was a Christmas Cook-a-Book. We read ‘Mooseltoe’ by Margie Palatini and ‘One Wild Christmas’ by Nicholas Oldland and the 2 snacks we made were Santa Claus Christmas crackers and Christmas tree waffle cones. When possible, I enjoy making one savory snack and one sweet treat. Children pre-registered for this program, so that I could plan accordingly, and we try to cap it at 20 kids. When we ran Cook-a-Book in-person, we met in the children’s area of our library to read the stories. Then all the kids washed their hands before heading to our conference room where we made the snacks. The kids could eat their snacks at the end of the program or choose to take them home, along with printed copies of the recipes.

Now that all of our library programming is virtual (and has been since April 1, 2020), I have worked hard to adapt any and all programs to the virtual Zoom platform. Cook-a-Book was surprisingly easy to adapt. I plan out my program and then make kits for each family that include as many of the ingredients as possible, along with printed recipes. Our families pick up the kits ahead of time via curbside service. When we meet up on the Zoom call, I simply read the stories to the kids and then we all make the snacks together! The kids love it so much and so do I. They’re getting that literacy component, which makes me feel great, plus they get the independence of making the snacks (mostly) on their own and then getting the satisfaction of showing off their culinary creations to their other friends!
Cook-a-Book is a home-run program and one that doesn’t require a lot of funding or a crazy amount of planning. I would love to help you get this program started in your library! Please email me if you have any questions or would like to discuss a Cook-a-Book program: tmontoney@senecafallslibrary.org

Tara Montoney  
Seneca Falls Library

**Cooking with Kids (Virtually): Rye Free Reading Room**

Like so many other libraries our service model pivoted during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in March. Librarians at the Rye Free Reading Room began working from home. The library previously experimented with the occasional food literacy program for kids and families. Senior Children’s Librarian, Lisa Fitzmaurice, launched the Cooking with Kids program via Zoom during the lockdown.

The weekly program now frequently averages an attendance of 15-20 families, or 25 participants, and many attendees are regulars (some who proudly proclaim “never missing a session since…”). It is the library’s most successful virtual program. You can preview our event description or register to attend upcoming spring events at ryelibrary.org/events.

Lisa picks the recipes well in advance of the sessions and looks for simple recipes that involve mixing, baking and easy steps. Ingredients and required cooking supplies are detailed on the library web calendar, in each event listing. Recipe steps are not posted in advance of the class. This allows the facilitator to be in control of the room, keeping all participants on the same step. We believe that this increases the feeling of cooking “together,” while also simplifying the class for the instructor, allowing them to answer all questions pertaining to one step before moving on to the next. For libraries that maintain a blog or social media, it makes for great, shareable content.

Elements that contribute to making the program successful:

- Lisa begins the sessions by asking participants to wash their hands and make sure that their Zoom name accurately reflects the names of participating children.
- Throughout the session, Lisa goes step by step. She gives an ingredient measurement and instruction, gives everyone the time to complete the step, then gauges the group’s completion by saying, “Give me a thumbs up if you’re ready to move on to the next step.”
- She encourages participants to stay muted while they’re working but to unmute themselves and speak up if they have a question, or to enter it in the chat.
- She helps participants catch up when they arrive late, checks in about mixture consistency and troubleshoots ingredient substitutions on-the-fly.

During the summer, the library reopened to staff and then the public with many new precautions and operating procedures. Lisa continues to return to her home kitchen on Wednesdays to host Cooking with Kids. Once or twice the program has been run without the host in a kitchen and it is still successful, though pacing is more reliant on participant cues and recipe questions can be more challenging to answer.

Session registrations often spike during holidays. The library brings in an additional staff member for tech support in sessions with high registration. The tech support person provides instructions in chat for those that might miss verbal instruction and can serve as back-up host in the case of technical issues. This person is also familiar with running the program in the event that Lisa is unavailable. The program is not recorded.
Other libraries are running similar programs with some success! The ALSC Virtual Institute in October featured Minnesota’s Curiosity Kitchen program at Anoka County Libraries, which leveraged community partnerships to purchase a Charlie Cart ($10,000)! The cost of the cart left most participants sticker-shocked, so they shared many other resources for getting a program off the ground: The Julia Child Foundation Grants and curriculum-building resources like Cooking Matters (“Kids in the Kitchen” handout), the Culinary Literacy Center at Philadelphia Free Library (recommended toolkit), and myplate.gov (especially Food Planning During the Pandemic).

The costs for running our program are low! Ingredients, zoom hosting, and the staff time to plan events. Best of all, the program brings families and community together. Parents, grandparents, caregivers, siblings - everyone mills about their kitchen together, proudly mixing, rolling, chopping and cooking. We hope to build on this program success by sharing the event template with other youth librarians, creating monthly “shopping lists” for our regular attendees, and featuring the occasional culinary workshop (e.g. knife skills) or guest starring local chefs.

Samantha Mairson and Lisa Fitzmaurice
Rye Free Library

A selection of the foods made during Rye’s Cooking with Kids Program

Letter From the Editor

I’d like to thank our member contributor’s Samantha Morgan, Tara Montoney, Samantha Mairson, and Lisa Fitzmaurice!

Do you have a program or service for children, teens, or families you would like to share? We’d love to highlight the incredible work everyone is doing, especially in light of the continued challenges of the pandemic. Please send your article in a Word attachment or as a shared file to nbrown@cldandj.org.

Articles are due for our Summer Newsletter by Friday, May 14. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Nan Brown
YSS Newsletter Editor