



Chelmsford Board of Library Trustees

Jillian Kenny, Chair



Standing from left to right: Trustees Laura Ecker and David Braslau, Library Director Becky Herrmann, Trustees Maggie Marshall and Jill Kenny
Seated from left to right: Trustees Sarah Conte, Katy Wood Van Dyne and Adam Schertzer

Chelmsford Board of Library Trustees

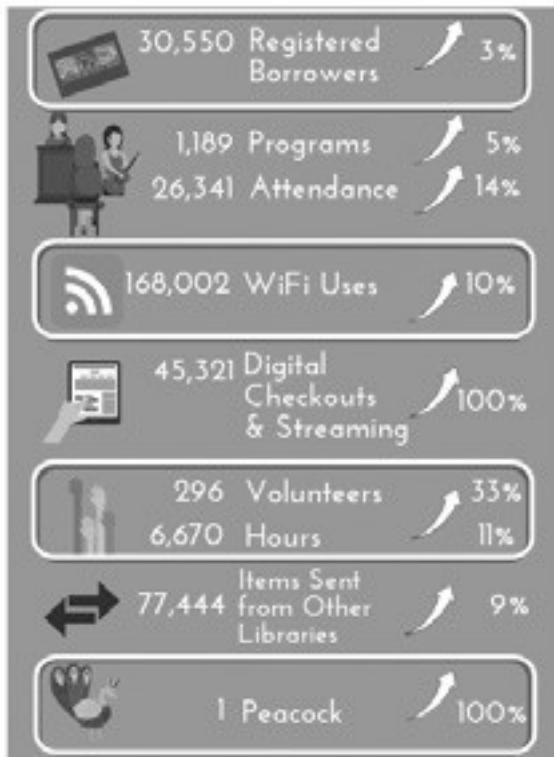
- Jillian Kenny, Chair
- Laura Ecker, Vice Chair
- Adam Schertzer, Treasurer
- Katy Van Dyne, Correspondence Secretary
- Maggie Marshall, Capital Planning Liaison
- Sarah Conte
- David Braslau

The Massachusetts Public Library Trustee Handbook states, "An effective public library board of trustees consists of informed and dedicated citizens representing a cross-section of the population who govern the library for the benefit of the community." Chelmsford is lucky to have a board of dedicated individuals who worked well together this year to accomplish our goals.

We participated in the development of the strategic plan by the library staff, which will be submitted this fall. The library staff did an amazing job to include the community when creating the strategic plan. We took the initiative to attend town meetings and made connections in the community. We also supported and attended many of the wonderful library events and programs.

We rolled out an annual giving campaign called "Make Your Impact" that the board has been developing over the past few years and are happy with the results thus far. Our big push with the Impact Fund this year was to fund a Mobile Pop-Up Library, which was an idea that grew out of a library survey that identified outreach as a top priority for town residents. The Pop-up Library will be ready in the spring of 2020. We plan to use our successful campaign strategies for future projects to add to our wonderful community centered library.

Trending Up for FY 19





Chelmsford Public Library

Becky Herrmann, Library Director



"Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much" – Helen Keller

This past year at the Chelmsford Library, we have been working with the schools, town departments, community and civic groups, authors, and performers to reach out and expand our programs and services -- breaking down barriers and creating community both inside and outside the library walls.

Creating Community

In October of 2018, The Chelmsford Library was one of three libraries awarded a Civic Engagement grant, a pilot project from the MA Board of Library Commissioners. Our REACT: Read, Engage and Come Together project, which runs from October 2018 to September 2019, consists of a series of programs and curated resources focused on six key issues in America today, namely, Poverty and Food Insecurity; Racial Justice; The Environment and Climate Change; LGBTQ+ rights and equality; Public Education; Immigration and Refugees. Our on-going series of discussions, led by Keith West, a moderator and debate coach, continue to provide a space for people to learn and engage in civil debate on issues often mired in misinformation, emotion and partisan politics.

Our REACT project aims to convey that the library is a welcoming community space for congenial conversation and discussion of civic issues. Over the course of this grant, we have engaged our residents in author talks, guided discussions, programs and film screenings, partnerships with area organizations, and a proliferation of well-researched resources to amplify conversations and combat misinformation. As referenced in the library mission, we hope that the community recognizes the library as "a bridge to exploration, engagement and enjoyment."

Also, as part of creating a welcoming environment for our town residents, we updated the exterior paint on the MacKay Branch and installed new carpet tile on the main floor of the Adams Library – the rest of the building will be carpeted in FY20.

Bringing the Community in

In FY19, as part of a broader outreach focus, we worked to fold more service, civic and interest groups into our library community.

- Elders Climate Action came and gave two REACT presentations, and out of this, interested attendees have formed a Chelmsford branch of the group that continues to meet regularly at the library to discuss climate issues.
- The League of Women Voters has been very involved in bringing two new programs to our library: Barbara Berenson and her book about the Women's Suffrage Movement in Massachusetts, and an upcoming program on Ranked Choice Voting in September, just in time for election season.
- We worked together with SEPAC (the Special Education Parent Advisory Council) to create a SEPAC collection in the Parenting section of the library. We partnered on programs, including a program for Dyslexia Awareness Month, and we began our Tales with Tails program at their request.
- We are working with the Chinese Family



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Network to improve our Chinese language collection for children and we hope to work with other bilingual community members to improve our other foreign language collections for children.

- We collaborated with a Girl Scout working on her Silver Award and with Open Space Chelmsford to revamp and unveil a brand new Story Walk! Thanks to Scout Jordan Harris' hard work to build Story Walk boxes, we will now be able to display stories year-round and rotate them seasonally.

We also puzzled over non-traditional ways to attract new users and bring a different segment of the community into the library, and so we grew our Library of Things – bike repair kits, mobile hotspots, digital projectors, telescopes and ukuleles and a wheelchair – these are just a few things that can be checked out with your library card.

And we asked for help from you. As we have developed our current strategic plan-we sent out surveys and fun quizzes, hosted focus groups and listening sessions. This information has helped us to formulate our goals and objectives for our three-year plan and shaped our programs for the year to come.

Breaking down Barriers

We decided to incorporate the themes of the grant into our annual One Book Chelmsford community-wide program. With racial barriers in mind, we invited up and coming poet and educator Clint Smith to visit and distributed over 500 copies of his intimate and accessible poetry collection *Counting Descent*. Smith speaks passionately about growing up as a young black man in America and we were fortunate to have him present twice – during the day at the Chelmsford High School for 700 students and at the library in the evening for around 150 people. Several students that saw him at the high school were so affected they brought their parents that night and others took part in our annual poetry

slam three months later. We were very pleased with the feedback from the community, many of whom still mention the impact of Mr. Smith's words.

We also chose to read an additional One Book Chelmsford title -*The Hate U Give*, and while author Angie Thomas was unable to visit, we did have our library book groups read it, hosted a special book discussion at the High School and screened the film three different times. This was another moving reading experience for many. At our moderated discussion on police brutality and racism, we had special guest Chief James Spinney who shared what Massachusetts and Chelmsford are doing for diversity and inclusion training and what steps are being taken to combat this inequality

One Book Chelmsford also offered a visit from reporter Meghan Irons, who was involved in the Boston Globe's Spotlight investigation into the realities of racism in Boston. And as part of the REACT project we offered an Ask a Muslim Anything program, led by photojournalist Robert Azzi. Azzi encouraged members of the public to ask him frank and important questions about the Muslim faith, a big step in clearing up stereotypes. Similarly, our Human Library event invited people representing marginalized groups to make themselves available to members of the public for honest and enlightening conversations about their experiences. Many attendees were moved to tears listening to the stories.

Helping to break down the age barriers, the Library has an active role in Chelmsford's Age-Friendly initiative, an initiative that resulted in Chelmsford being designated as an Age-Friendly Community by AARP, opening up grant opportunities. We are leading the team that is collecting data about the community's current information and communication infrastructure.

As part of that initiative, we added a special Senior Resources section to our website, to help connect seniors with agencies, organizations,



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and library services tailored to their needs. And to further accessibility for all, we also added the translate feature to our website, making our website more accessible to speakers of 100+ languages.

Outside the Library Walls

And when groups cannot come to us, we go to them. Much of our work this year extended our reach beyond the building itself.

- Throughout the year, library staff and Trustees made visits to many local agencies and community groups such as The Center for the Arts, the Historic Commission, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, the PTO, Rotary, etc. If we haven't visited you yet, let us know! Our goal is to learn more about the groups that are active around Chelmsford, and to highlight library resources that can help with their mission and activities.
- As an example, we attended the Historic Commission meeting, and learned their members used to do tours of Forefathers Cemetery. After making that connection, library staff is partnering with the Commission to bring back these tours.
- Library personnel have also lent expertise to help the Town Clerk with the public records archiving project.
- Chelmsford Telemedia works with the library recording our programs to air on cable television and for patrons to check out of the library. They also partner with us for an on-air weekly storytime show.
- Together, the Youth Services (YS) staff visited over 20 classrooms during the Community Read-In!
- YS staff visit preschools and home daycare centers offsite, tailoring storytimes and educating the daycare providers on promoting early literacy. Many of these daycares serve children and families who are in need.

- The library also reached out in unexpected places such as the winter and summer Farmer's Markets, with displays, books to share, onsite storytimes and reading recommendations.
- The annual Volunteer Fair serves not only to connect local groups with potential volunteers, but to connect them with each other. The Volunteer Fair provides a great opportunity to connect teen volunteers (and adults) with charitable and community organizations.

Making an Impact – A New Way to Reach Out!

Finally, the Pop-up Mobile Library, which is the trustees first project for the "Make Your Impact" campaign was publicized and funds were donated, helping raise awareness throughout the community of the potential for the library to reach patrons in a very literal way! There have been 82 donations so far – and \$44,796 raised as of this report printing – with the Friends of the Library kicking it off with a leadership gift of \$15,000!

This Mobile Library will allow library staff to bring resources to senior housing, parks, beaches, playgrounds, daycares, neighborhoods, the Farmer's Market - anywhere in Town (and we're taking suggestions!). This helps us reach more people with access to library services. Thank you to all who have participated in this project – watch for the roll-out this fall!

Library Connections FY19

