

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Director's Report

Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director

January through June tends to be the busiest time of year in terms of my workload (a whole six months!), but it includes some of my favorite routine “things to do,” such as the Annual Report and the budget prep/budget vote/trustee election. As time consuming as these are, they fill me with a sense of accomplishment when they come together. And I’m happy to report that they are coming together.

I just submitted our Annual Report for 2022/2023 and will be presenting this to the Board for approval on March 18th. When I have a few moments, I plan to also complete the annual report yearly comparisons – I just need a few moments!

I completed the preparation of the trustee candidate petition packets. Mallory Marinaro prepared public information to go out this week (3/11) alerting the public of the opportunity.

This year’s National Library Week will be celebrated from April 7th through April 13th. As in the past, we’ll be celebrating National Library Worker Appreciation Day on April 9th and well be celebrating our volunteers the following Wednesday, April 17th. For more about National Library Week, please see the [American Library Association's National Library Week 2024](#) page.

Board and Committee Work

Congratulations on another good Meet the Trustees event on February 27th! The Board has another event planned for March 15th.

Budget and Finance

A big thank you to Bob Majernik and the Finance Committee for their patience as I work through the budget planning process. The Finance Committee has reviewed a draft budget, which was also presented to the Board at a Special Meeting on March 4th. Bob and I are making some final adjustments and then we will have a proposed budget ready for Board approval at the March 18th meeting.

Building and Grounds

Molly Robbins, Phil Rice, Mallory Marinaro and I met with the engineers from SGH on March 7th to discuss their answers to questions that were submitted to them regarding the wall repair.

The same group also met with the architects from Lothrop to go over their answers to our questions, as well as a revised and more complete budget for the full project. Molly and I have been discussing a middle ground proposed scope that we’d like to discuss with the Buildings and Grounds Committee. In light of higher than anticipated costs, including the cost of the retaining wall repair, we’d like to discuss a scaled back project that will still accomplish our

intended service goals, but that will fall within a debt service amount that more closely matches the amount of the previous bond. (Goal 5.5 and 5.6)

Mallory Marinaro and I will be working with Ginnie Blake West next week (week of 3/18) to start to analyze the results of the building improvements survey that we did. We received 287 responses after several PR pushes and look forward to digging into the results. (Goals 4.3, 5.5, and 5.6)

Outreach

I was happy to be able to attend the Greater Ossining Chamber of Commerce meeting on February 26th. The library has long been a member of the Chamber and we are looking forward to working with them now that they have a new board with new ideas and exciting plans.

Personnel

I am happy (relieved) to report that I was finally provided with the Staff Assistant list by Westchester County Department of Human Resources. I put together the fastest mail merge of my career and sent out the canvass letters the very next day. The deadline for responses is March 11 and I am now waiting on the Ossining Post Office to deliver any stragglers (I usually give it a couple of days) before I move ahead. I look forward to being able to appoint someone who can help us with the many backlogs and tasks in the Business Office – many of which have been pulling me away from other work that needs by attention. I want to stress that the training and orientation of the new employee will be long and time consuming, so my time will not be immediately freed up, but it will be nice to have a light at the end of the tunnel to look towards. Again, a big thank you to Terrie Keppler and Bob Majernik for all of their work helping us keep on top of things. (Goals 3.1 and 3.2)

We are still waiting on Westchester County HR to let us know about our requested Facilities Manager position. (Pillar 5)

The Civil Service Committee of the Public Library Directors Association (Westchester County) has scheduled a meeting with Lisa Denig, the new Commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Human Resources. Many of us have been struggling with delays, long waiting times on answers to questions, wrong information, lost documents, etc. and I look forward to speaking with her and learning how they might address these issues.

Speaking of civil service, just when I thought we were all caught up with outstanding civil service paperwork, more loose ends were brought to my attention. Luckily, all were simply paperwork issues and I took care of what was needed. Fingers crossed that that was the last of it.

I will be bringing to the Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee a request to consider engaging an HR consultant who specializes in public sector employers. As some of you might remember, we used to engage Grant Schneider of PD Strategies, an HR consultant how helped us with a variety of HR issues, including employee performance issues, supervisor/employee conflict, investigations, coaching, etc. Unfortunately, Grant passed away and we no longer have an outside person to guide us through difficult personnel issues. We do call on our attorney when the issue is a union contract issue or has a legal component, but many times, issues either don't arise to that level of need or are not appropriate for attorney involvement (such as a

performance issue that is in early stages). In conversation with a director colleague, I learned of a firm ([Public Sector HR](#)) who specializes in this. I spoke with one of their representatives and asked for two proposals – one for a consultation retainer and one for an Employee Handbook review – to get a sense of their pricing. I'd like to discuss this further with the Committee as I feel that their services would be of potential value to us. More to come.

We have scheduled the first union contract negotiation meeting for early April. Craig Olivo and I will keep the board apprised of progress once we get started.

Services and Technology

Allison Robbins, Mallory Marinaro, Marie Trapasso and I are working with Bibliotheca to review proposals for the outdoor materials pickup lockers (which we plan to move forward with) and also for self-check units for inside the building (which we are investigating and hope to find funding for). As you know, our mobile app allows for self-checkout, but not everyone is comfortable using our mobile app. Self-check is becoming ubiquitous, and I'd love to be able to offer our patrons another convenient way to avail themselves of library materials. More to come.

News from the Public Library Directors Association and the Westchester Library System

Some meetings and workshops that I attended this month (Leadership Team Meetings happen roughly every other week, meetings with Board President happen routinely, meetings with individual staff happen regularly and as needed):

February 5: Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee Meeting
February 7: Friends/Foundation/Ginnie Blake West Marketing Meeting
February 8: Meeting with Logically (with Allison Robbins) on technology check in
February 8: Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting
February 14: Meeting for One-on-One Services (Diana Lennon, Mark Sacha, Mallory Marinaro, Allison Robbins)
February 15: Public Library Directors Association Meeting
February 22: Meeting with Bibliotheca (Allison Robbins)
February 23: Finance Committee Meeting
February 26: Chamber of Commerce Meeting
February 27: Meet the Trustees
March 4: Special Board of Trustees Meeting
March 5: Calendar Work Flow Meeting (James Trapasso and Diana Lennon)
March 7: Meeting with SGH Engineers (Phil Rice, Molly Robbins, Mallory Marinaro)
March 8: Meeting with Lothrop (Phil Rice, Molly Robbins, Mallory Marinaro)
March 12: Foundation Board Meeting

Attached please find our Department Reports.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen LaRocca-Fels

Diana Lennon, Adult Services

Our Adult Services team continues to move through our nonfiction audit, and we have begun to deeply weed the fiction collection on the Mezzanine. Cristella Bond has deleted over two hundred books from the 200s (religion, spirituality, etc) and we are purchasing about a hundred new books. She and I encountered many fiction titles that were in poor condition and/or had not circulated in a while. After some weeding, the collection already looks better and is much neater and updated. We are happy to report that Mark Sacha finished the main work of the 900s audit and now is on to clean-up tasks, number crunching, and reporting. About 4300 titles were audited, not including items that were not found (missing or lost), items weeded (300+) or replaced, or items that we acquired during the course of the audit. The simplified(!) call number schema is 23 pages long and will be a critical piece of our new Cataloging Manual. Marie Pierre continues to work on the 600s, and Marci Dressler is almost through the 800s. We have the 400s and 700s to do, and Mark will move on to the Local History collection. This has been a Herculean task and I am so grateful to all who have participated in the audit. (Goal 2.2)

February was busy at service desks as there were 888 interactions recorded in Gimlet on the Adult Services desk, up 18% from January, and 680 at the Front Desk. Interactions at both desks increased in length of time spent with patrons.

In Professional Development, Mark, Cristella, and I took an ALA/PLA webinar on Feb. 29: *Embracing a Public Service Mindset to Better Demonstrate Your Library's Value*. While we thought a lot of it focused on practices we already do at OPL, there were some helpful points. The difference, for example, between being a "Public Servant" who listens to the community, or a "Library Servant" who tells the public about what we do, was discussed. They also promoted the idea of library staff being active community members and how that can help win over "fence-sitters" to be library supporters. The speakers also pointed out the power of the language and images we use, such as "literacy" for "reading books" and "summer learning" instead of "summer reading". (Goal 3.2)

Guillermo Rodriguez, Cristella, and I are working on summer *learning* with other departments, and making progress towards hopefully involving more adults in the fun! We hope to have some new ideas and events planned soon.

During Black History Month, we enjoyed a concert by the Tony Jefferson Quartet, an art reception and exhibit of "BESZ (Botswana, Egypt, South Africa, & Zimbabwe) Through the Lens of Larry Salley" and the Feb. 22 program "Discovering the Frank Brothers: Freeborn Men of Color, Soldiers of Independence". The multi-media presentation "Journey to Johannesburg" was presented by Toby Tobias, a South African born Jewish boy who grew up during apartheid. The program was an incredible and moving story of Toby's journey in life, and he wrote all the songs that corresponded to the slides he presented. The Talk Culture Book Club read *Walk Through Fire - A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Triumph* by Sheila Johnson, and my Golden Eagles Book Club read Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*. Various staff contributed to an excellent display that highlighted our books on Black History and biographies about African Americans. (Goal 2.1)

Unfortunately, our Friday Health Navigator will be out for at least six weeks for an operation. Career Coaching is still in high demand, and AARP Tax-Aide began this month and is quite popular as expected!

We are very excited for our [Eclipse Viewing Party on Monday afternoon, April 8](#). We have a lot of eclipse viewing glasses to distribute, and will have an informational presentation on the eclipse, on proper safety procedures and indirect viewing methods in the Theater at 2pm. We are expecting a large crowd!

Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services

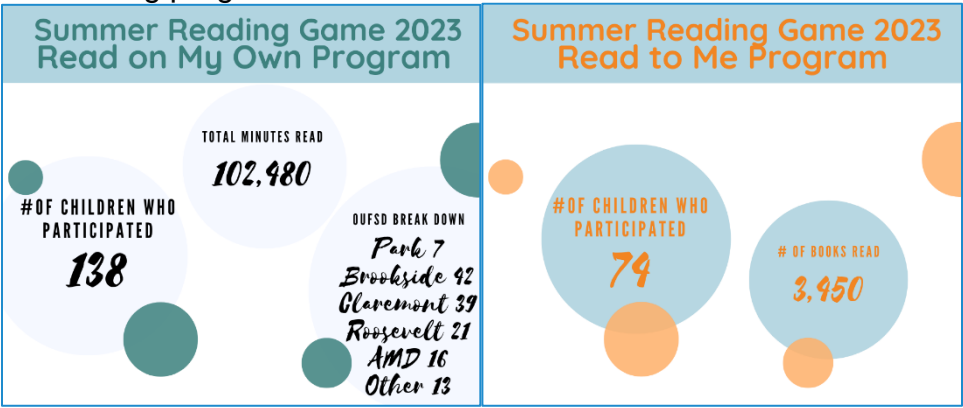
This month Alexandra Pintado was able to experience her first outreach experience in collaboration with OPrime. She attended a new family welcome event at Park School on February 15. Alexandra stated that she answered many questions. She had some interest in our teen programming, and she walked the family through on how to go into the calendar to see the teen programs. She was also happy to report all the families who visited OPL's table already had library cards. Alexandra has also been shadowing me during my bilingual Storytimes. She assisted me on February 23 by reading a book. She's excited to host her first bilingual Storytime with me assisting at the end of April. Alexandra has also been pulling holds to become acquainted with the collections, shelving books, relabeling books, learning the process of linking and becoming acquainted with sitting at the information desk and all that comes with that. (Goals 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.3)

Our visits with Park School Pre-K classes continue. We've had to reschedule 2 classes due to snow but nevertheless all the classes will get a chance to visit us. I'll resume my visits to Park school on March 25th to provide Storytime once again to PreK and now Kindergarten classes until the school year ends. I had another visit to Ossining Children's Center on February 28th. I met with their 3 PreK classes. We geared up for their visit to OPL on March 12, so we read about the library and talked about how the library works. (Goals 4.1 and 4.3)

We celebrated Lunar New Year on Saturday, February 3rd with a special Storytime and lantern making. We also celebrated black voices this month with our first Little Critics Book Club, where children had the opportunity to choose their favorite picture books showcasing black voices. Kevin read his picks and the children listened to more than 10 picture books, and then voted on their favorites. The winners were *A Bear*, *A Bee* and *A Honey Tree* by Daniel Bernstrom and *The Talk* by Alicia Williams. I'm looking forward to our next Little Critics meeting on March 14th where Joy will share picture books about fascinating women. To see what books are favored by the children in the upcoming Little Critics meetings, check out the new page I created on the children's portion of the website. [Book Clubs - Ossining Public Library \(ossininglibrary.org\)](#) (Goal 2.1)

Joy's Act your Art Out program when extremely well on February 22. She had some very creative monologues written based on art by children in 3rd and 4th grades. Tricia has really made I heart Art her own. She has been doing some cool art projects, playing with materials, textures and colors. I am happy that Tricia decided to change the age requirements to this program to all ages. Her projects engage all children regardless of age, and it's nice to see. Check out pictures of all our programs and classes. [Ossining Library's albums | Flickr](#)

Summer Reading is in our sights. We've had another planning meeting with department heads and other team members on February 29. This year the children's room will be hosting two kickoff events, one for our Read to Me program and one for our Reading on My Own program. We plan on having an Ossining adventure, complete with a map and clues at each location. We also hope our map adventure will encourage more community partners to support the program, such as Big Foot Creamery. Big Foot has been a huge supporter these past 2 years, providing us with free ice cream coupons as incentives for reading. This may help our goal to pass our numbers from last year. I am really looking forward to another successful summer reading program.



Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services

I know I say this every month—I promise that I don't copy and paste these reports, I just have deep-rooted issues with the passage of time and feel the need to tell you about this repeatedly—but last month went by so very quickly and I barely got my bearings before it was off to March and all of the projects coming up this spring (like, you know, the budget vote and work to do on a little old building project...).

February was a month of planning—from conceptualizing our Summer Reading Programs to refining our popular Tech Tutoring service, there was a lot of really good conversation and great interdepartmental collaboration.

Many thanks to Diana, Guillermo, and Mark for taking on shifts as Tech Tutors, and to Lisa Eickler and Jenny Meudt for their work decorating the Front Desk for Valentine's Day—our beloved Groggu was kitted out in style, and as her garland and décor proves, Jenny is a master of the Cricut. I can't wait to see what's coming for spring!

Front Desk Reading Challenge

This month, I started a reading challenge at the front desk. Because of who I am as a person, I themed the first challenge around Taylor Swift (you may have heard of her). A big part of this challenge, and one that makes it different from our typical summer reading program, is that participation is based on reading every day for the month, with no time limit or content restrictions. It was important to me that we make this equitable for all readers, regardless of age or reading ability. Let's celebrate reading in all formats, for all ages!

As a supplemental challenge, I designed a list of reading suggestions based on each Swiftie era to help people choose a title: “22” asks people to read a book with a number in the title, and the “Reputation” era suggests a black and white color. I’m interested in seeing what people read, because I am forever looking for book suggestions to add to the literal mountain of books on my nightstand that puts my small children and dog at an ever-present risk of bodily harm.

I’m excited to put forth one of these challenges every month and I hope our patrons find it as engaging!

Building Survey

In addition to the eblasts, website, and social media promotion of our building survey, I put signage around the building with a QR code to capture visitors who may not engage with us online. I also printed out hard copies to have behind the front desk for anyone who prefers to put pen to paper; we’ve gotten a few written surveys and it’s interesting (and sweet) to see how many people use questions about the building to pay us general compliments. (Goals 3.3, 5.5, and 5.6)

Allison Robbins, Technology and Training

Bibliotheca: We reconnected with Bibliotheca and had a virtual demonstration of the self-checkout interface and discussed the pickup lockers, again. Mallory, Marie, Karen, and I will all be meeting in March to discuss our goals for self-checkout and locker pickup adoption to help us drive our decision making in choosing models, quantities, and locations for self-checkout and should be able to make our decision soon after. Once we have our funding source solidified, we should be able to order the devices and roll these services out within a few months of purchase, pending manufacture and delivery times. (Goal 5.1)

Tech Tutoring: A group of us met over the course of February, discussing the future of Tech. Tutoring and other one-on-one services that the library provides. It has been very constructive, and our relaunch of Tech. Tutoring should take place sometime in March. Additionally, we put a call out for additional volunteers to help us with Tech. Tutoring when it picks up again and I am very happy to welcome Diana, Guillermo, and Mark to the Tech. Tutoring group. They have volunteered to be “on the schedule” for one session each week, which helps us expand the timeframe of tutor coverage as well as offer more Spanish language tutor appointments in addition to those that Aimee offers now. (Goals 2.3 and 4.3)

Connect Westchester: We are set to host a cohort of Connect Westchester, a WLS and STEM Alliance joint program at OPL in April. Connect Westchester is a weeklong program (10 hours), focused primarily on workforce development, that provides instruction and guidance on using Chromebooks that the program provides to registrants to keep. They also provide guidance on applying for reduced cost internet through the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). With the Spanish language instructors available through STEM Alliance, we are hosting a Spanish language cohort of up to 15 registrants. This is a great opportunity to help community members and I hope we get a full house. (Goal 2.3 and 4.3)

Batteries: It's a small thing, but worth the page space, I believe! As we try to clean up the appearance of our electronics in public spaces of the library, I am opting for replacing aged/malfunctioning keyboards and mice with wireless options when needed. Wireless peripherals, however, need batteries to operate and we have over 80 computers in the building, resulting in more than 160 peripherals that use 1-2 batteries each if they are wireless. To cut back on the amount of single use batteries that we consume and discard, we have invested in a small collection of rechargeable batteries that should last the library for many years. As old batteries die, they are being replaced by their rechargeable counterparts with the help of the staff who use them. Hopefully, this initial "test" of using rechargeable batteries goes well and we will continue to transition. (Goal 5.1)

Molly Robbins, Assistant Director

My report is somewhat brief this month. February is a shorter month, and I was fortunate to have a weeklong holiday over the school's winter break.

B&G Department News -

The B&G team completed fifty-six work orders in addition to their routine tasks and responsibilities. We continue to be short of two PT cleaners and one PT custodian. I am happy to report that by the end of February I received thirty-one applications. I collaborated with other staff to get the word out and their contributions made a significant difference. It is nice to see that adding a personal touch to recruiting works so well. I look forward to reporting on one or two new hires in the March report.

John Tortoso was out all February. I coordinated with Canopy Roofing and Indusi Plumbing to complete work that was scheduled to take place in February.

I helped resolve minor issues in the business office by buying new filing cabinets, clearing out the HR closet of extraneous materials, and covering windows to deal with glare.

During a review of shelving conditions, I identified five runs of bookshelves that needed additional bracing. Steve Garrett and Steven Washburn worked quickly to fix the problem.

AARP Tax-Aide weekly sessions began in February, and the Friends also began collecting materials for their next book sale. B&G staff assist these programs with set-up support, helping keep tax forms in order throughout tax season, and moving the large quantities of donated materials from the donation bins and building exterior into the Friends area of the 5000.

Replacing a good bit of worn-out B&G equipment became necessary. It seems like many tools have reached the end of their natural lives and I am working steadily to make sure that we have dependable, quality equipment that is in good working order available at all times.

Assistant Director Work –

2/8 -I provided a tour for BOMA at the request of the OPL Foundation.

2/8 – Coordinated and attended the BOT B&G Committee meeting.

2/9 – met with Canopy Roofing to review recent work and discuss ongoing concerns.

2/15 – Zoom meeting with Lothrop.

2/15 – onsite parking lot concerns & review meeting with Maddi Zachac and Joe Agostinelli from the Village of Ossining.

2/17 to 2/25 -in the UK

On an ongoing basis I oversee the magazine room and keep it organized, keep business office and B&G inventory stocked, and manage the follow if incoming inventory that is not book related.

Marie Trapasso, Circulation/Technical Services

Am I alone in my thinking that Leap Years shouldn't be a thing? I "understand" why we do it but we are adding another day to Winter. No thanks.

In good news, I interviewed some very good candidates for our open Page positions. I am hoping to have at least one new Page in place by March.

Evergreen Patron Purge

I attended a meeting with WLS and other libraries to discuss the patron purge from Evergreen that will take place. To give a little backstory to this, library cards expire every 3 years. Once a library card has been expired for 18 months, with no bills or items checked out, that card is supposed to be purged, behind the scenes, from Evergreen by Equinox (our Evergreen provider.)

It came to my attention over the Summer 2023 that expired cards seemed to still be hanging out in Evergreen. This past Fall, me and 2 other libraries started really pushing the issue with WLS as we were not satisfied with their answer and we were *still* noticing expired cards popping up in Evergreen. We have since discovered that ever since we migrated to Evergreen in 2019, ZERO expired cards have been purged from Evergreen. The result is 253,681 expired records in Evergreen that should have been removed, which accounts for half of the patron database.

To make matters worse, 14,371 of these expired cards are currently being used to access online resources (Libby, Hoopla, etc.) You may be wondering "what's Ossining's share of this." Are you ready for it? Ossining currently has 9,145 purgeable records and 985 patrons who are currently using online resources with an expired card. Furthermore, the only way patrons are notified their card is about to expire, is through a system generated email. If the patron does NOT have an email address listed in Evergreen, they are not notified.

So, as you can see, this is not a small problem. WLS sent one "Last chance" email to those patrons who are accessing digital resources using an expired card. They were told to contact their library to renew their card or it will be deleted. We received quite a few phone calls and emails from patrons after this email was sent out. The Front Desk staff have been diligently renewing library cards for patrons as they call or come in. However, we have many patrons who do NOT have an email address on file so they are not being notified their card expired. The Patron Services staff is calling these patrons to warn them their card is expired and will be deleted if they do not renew it. They also then add an email address to the patron's record if the patron can provide one.

WLS will start purging expired cards on March 13. The cards that will be purged are cards that have been expired for 18 months or longer and have had ZERO use online or in house

since 2022. They will also purge cards that have been expired for 24 months or longer and have under \$25 in fines on their records and have had no activity. I will provide more updates as I receive them.

Promotional Materials

I created 21 screen graphics for promotion of March programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 8 placards for program promotion in Aspen.

Circ Statistics:

Patrons added: 134

**Interlibrary Loans: (received at Ossining): 1,843
(supplied to other libraries): 1,335**

Total Circulation (including eBooks): 15,946

There were 112 checkouts from the Mobile App.

There were 4,866 total checkouts from Overdrive.

There were 1,165 checkouts on just Ossining Advantage titles.

Our museum passes circulated 45 times.

Tech Statistics:

Items Added: 683

Items Deleted: 1,296

Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services

Tamarah Bridgewater, representing ENU Builds, and I finalized details for the Women in Folklore series for Women's History Month. There is an exciting and eclectic lineup of presenters including jump the broom, brickmaking, weaving, African dance, and music making. (Goal 2.1)

I met with Kemaya Massaline, our chess instructor. We've been offering chess instruction during our collaborative Chess program with Detective Chavez on Wednesdays evenings. Kenya and I believe there is a need to return to a more traditional chess instruction with a structured learning and then interactive use of that learning.

I am happy to report that we are seeing some movement with the YA Spanish collection. Most recently, a mom and her daughter who is in the dual language program came looking for books to supplement what they have in school. I intend to have one of us reach out to Nancy de la Cruz-Arroyo to remind her of the collection we have and to see if we can support it in any other way. (Goals 2.2 and 4.1)

"Pal" entines card making was very popular this month with students seeking community service. For every 6 cards made for hospitalized teens and children an hour of community service is earned. I am hoping to have a few community service kits available so that kids looking for service may just drop in a do a project. We are always in need of teen volunteers during the summer months, but they are typically not looking for hours. I've been in discussions with OHS to see if the students can earn their upcoming school year hours over

the summer and it seems like this may be allowed. We will hopefully finalize parameters in a month or two. (Goals 2.1 and 4.1)

Foodie Fun continues to be very popular. What teen doesn't like a fun snack! This month they made pizza bagels with all the toppings, including mushrooms and crepes filled with fresh strawberries, whipped cream and chocolate sauce.

Marie kicked off the Manga Book club this month and the participants were excited to receive their own copy of the first book in a series they were not familiar with. Discussion ensued and it was decided to watch the anime of the manga they discuss at each meeting. They also enjoyed an array of Japanese. Chinese and Korean snacks! (Goal 2.2)

The Teen Book Club had a battle of the books type competition to see who really knew all there was about our February read, "Sythe". Myra, our winner, answered 30 of the 50 questions correctly and won a gift card for Hudson Valley Books for Humanity. Fun was had by all.

We had two programs using our Cricut. In case you are not familiar with the Cricut, it is a smart cutting machine that works with an easy-to-use app to help you design and personalize almost anything —cards, t-shirts, mugs, and so much more. Participants made personalized bags and personalized mugs during their winter break. They have told us for the next program they would like to design t-shirts. I think we will also try our hand at making cards for Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Alas, with the time change also comes are final laser tag for the season in March. We are expecting a full house and new battle types from Louis!

Coming up in March, we're looking forward to the start of the Creative Writing Workshops, the Teen Art Club showcasing the art of women and social issues, Women in Folklore, Navigating College Admissions and more Foodie Fun!