



BERGENFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY 20 **ANNUAL REPORT** 20



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Every December as the year is winding down, I always take a moment to compile a list of projects and goals that I'd like to tackle in the coming year. Back in 2019, I can safely say that I never envisioned "pandemic planning" to be a significant part of my list for 2020 (then again, who could?)

When the Library received the orders to shut down in March, none of us had any idea about the severity of the pandemic and the extent to which it would change our lives. As the situation unfolded, the Library had to quickly adapt to assist its residents as the number of COVID-19 cases grew higher and higher in town.

Admittedly, it was challenging at first to figure out the Library's new role amidst the public health crisis. Many of our traditional programs and services specifically focus on in-person and real-time experiences, such as our ESL tutoring, story times, one on one computer lessons and, oh yeah, borrowing physical books and other materials. How could we serve the community if our building was closed indefinitely?

The answer quickly emerged - **by giving Bergenfield residents the tools they needed so they could remain safely at home.**

The Library purchased additional eContent and the streaming service Kanopy so that patrons could have access to new entertainment (and stop watching the news for a bit.) Youth and Adult services staff developed a slate of virtual programs for children and adults who were stuck at home and likely bored. Staff began making wellness phone calls to seniors who were in need of some good old fashioned conversation. Reference staff were available via chat and email to answer homework and research questions and provide referral information about social services.

In short, though we weren't physically open, we were still very much connecting with people...just at a safe distance.

Nothing felt as good as when we were allowed to reopen the building in July and actually "see" our patrons again. Though the new normal is still very strange and different with masks, gallons of hand sanitizer and plexiglass barriers, it's a joy to be able to serve our residents in person again.

In spite of all of the hardships, 2020 has taught us a lot about resilience, patience and kindness towards others. I have never been more proud to be part of the Bergenfield community and to lead such a fantastic organization. The Library will always be here to help Bergenfield families as we battle through these uncertain times. Together, this community can get through anything.

ALLISON BALLO
LIBRARY DIRECTOR

COVID-19 RESPONSE



Like most businesses, schools and organizations, the Library was forced to close its doors to the public in mid-March due to the pandemic. When it became clear that the closure was going to extend past a few weeks, staff quickly pivoted their plans and created its “Virtual Branch” (<https://www.bergenfieldlibrary.org/virtualbranch>) to ensure that residents would still have access to new or modified library services even if the facility was closed.

For the 4 month closure, the Library implemented several new programs and services including:

- Weekly wellness phone calls and emails to Bergenfield seniors and other residents
- Digital library cards to ensure that Bergenfield residents would have access to all electronic collections and resources
- Virtual programming for all ages. Sample programs included story times, sing alongs, puzzles and scavenger hunts, craft and cooking tutorials and interactive video game club
- Chat and email reference assistance
- Increased investment in eBooks and other digital platforms such as Brainfuse (virtual tutoring service) and Kanopy (streaming media service)
- Creation of an online searchable archive with digitized scans of Bergenfield’s local history (<http://www.bergenfieldlibrary.org/localhistory/>) This is a work in progress and will be continually updated.
- Building modifications including protective barriers at all public service desks, updated door counter equipment, hand sanitizing stations, self check-out kiosk and Clinton Avenue story walk

On June 22, as part of the Governor’s updated Executive Orders, the Library was able to reopen for curbside/contactless pick up. The Library later reopened the facility to the public on July 13 and remained the sole open Library in the area for weeks. In August, hours of operation were expanded to include nights and weekends.

Library Administration implemented strict COVID-19 safeguards in compliance with State and local public health requirements including daily employee health screenings, enhanced facility cleaning, quarantining of all returned materials, social distancing measures, and increased access to handwashing/personal sanitization. The Library Board of Trustees approved its COVID-19 policy on July 9 to ensure that all visitors would comply with these new health requirements.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

ACTIVITY

Total Visitors: 54,348

Hours Open Per Week:

56 (from 1/1 to 3/13)

53 (from 7/13 to 11/30)

39 (from 12/1 to 12/31)



IMPORTANT DATES IN 2020

Mar. 13 – Library closed due to COVID-19

Jun. 8 – BCCLS restarts delivery of Bergenfield items back to Library

Jun. 22 – Library opens for curbside pick up

Jul. 13 – Library building opens to the public

Jul. 15 – BCCLS resumes lend and send from other libraries

Aug. 3 – Library expands hours of operation to weeknights (Mon–Thu)

Sept. 8 – Library expands hours of operation to include Sundays

Dec. 1 – Library rolls back service to curbside pick up

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

112 Adult Programs Hosted

318 Children's Programs Hosted

463 ESL Classes Conducted

CIRCULATION

168 digital library cards issued during the COVID-19 closure

138,084 physical items borrowed

20,792 eBook and eAudio items borrowed

1,935 videos streamed off of Kanopy

33,209 items loaned to other BCCLS libraries

ELECTRONIC SERVICES

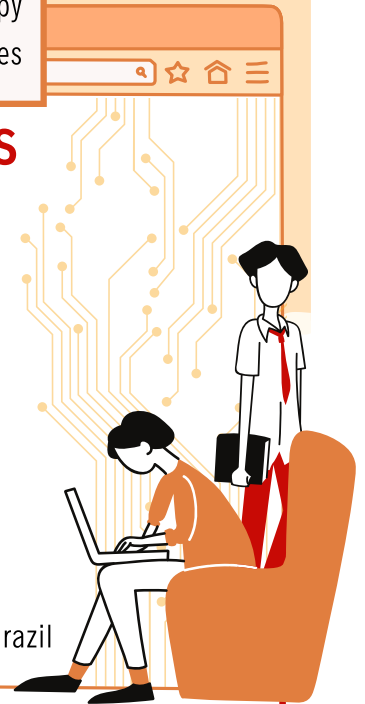
2,767 Computer Sessions

58,948 Wireless Sessions

914 Uses of Brainfuse Virtual Tutoring Database

Social Media Page Engagement:

- **27%** increase in followers
- Virtual programs were viewed by people in the Philippines, India, Canada, Pakistan, Colombia and Brazil



Residents saved
\$1,532,310
by borrowing our books,
DVDs, CDs, magazines,
video games, eBooks,
Museum Passes and more!



DOLLARS & CENTS

Average value of materials borrowed on a Bergenfield Library card

\$572

2020 Appropriation cost per capita

\$54.99

Cost per day to each resident

\$0.15



STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITY:

HOW'D WE DO IN 2020?

MISSION:

The Bergenfield Public Library provides opportunities, resources and services that empower residents of all ages to maximize their true potential and unlock the best in Bergenfield.



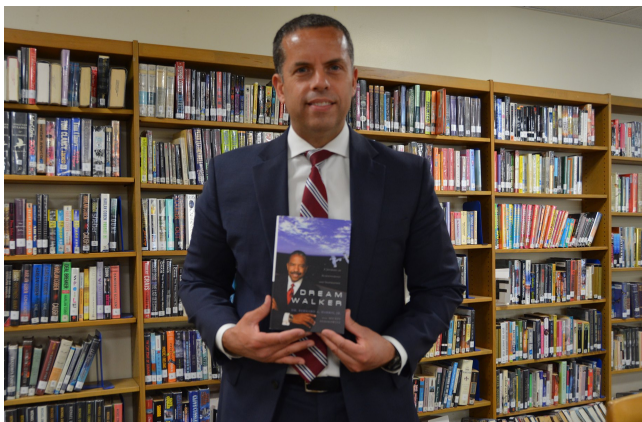
GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL ONE: LEAD THE COMMUNITY AS THE PRIMARY CULTURAL AND CIVIC CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

- Launch of circulating Museum Pass program.
- Purchase of streaming service Kanopy. Kanopy offers thousands of movies (over 2,000 of them are in foreign languages), the Great Courses educational series, as well as an extensive collection of Kids content including *Sesame Street* and *Arthur*
- Hosted a diverse slate of multicultural adult programs, including “Let It Shine: The American Civil Rights Movement” (celebrating Black History month), “Ritmo Caliente” Zoom concert (celebrating Hispanic Heritage month) and “Filipino American History Month Celebration” Zoom performance.
- In response to growing concerns about racial injustice, hosted two virtual programs: “White Like Me” discussion with Tim Wise and “I’m Not Dying with you Tonight” book talk
- Transition to all virtual Citizenship Exam preparation series cohort
- Creation of online searchable local history archive

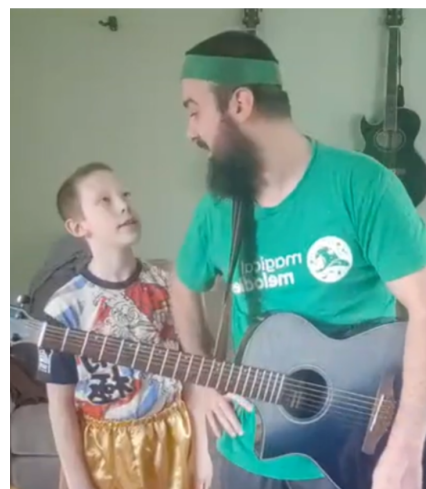
GOAL TWO: FOSTER A COMFORTABLE AND FRIENDLY SPACE

- COVID-19 related building modifications included:
 - Painting of Children's Room and Lower Level
 - Cleaning and reorganization of all collections and workstations
 - Retrofitting all public bathroom and lighting fixtures to motion-sensored
 - Upgraded door counter/occupancy equipment
 - Installation of hand sanitizing stations and protective barrier shields
 - Upgraded cleaning/disinfection equipment
 - Replacement of faulty electric water heater
- Technology upgrades to the building included installation of new multi-function public photocopiers, wireless printing, networking and installation of self-check kiosk and remote access software
- Launch of exterior Story Walk
- Updated and revised the following policies and procedures:
 - Creation of associated "family" cards
 - COVID-19 health and safety protocols for staff and public
 - Protocol for virtual meetings
- During the COVID-19 closure, staff participated in 170 professional development trainings, workshops and webinars



GOAL THREE: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

- Before the COVID-19 closure, staff participated in the following community events:
 - Jefferson School's Vendor Night
 - MLK Day of Service
 - Little League Game Night
 - The Spanish American Cultural Association's Dominican Independence Celebration
 - Read Across America Day
- During the COVID-19 closure, staff coordinated with DPW, Ambulance Corps and the Bergenfield School district to provide content for the Library's social media pages.
- During the COVID-19 closure, staff communicated extensively with the Bergenfield school district regarding eBook titles to purchase to support curriculum, virtual programming opportunities and promotion of the virtual tutoring service Brainfuse.
- Worked with the Filipino School of NY/NJ to provide pre-recorded "Kuwentuhang Pilipino Story Time" videos to be posted on the Library's Facebook page. The videos are posted on the 2nd Saturday of each month from October through June.



GOAL FOUR: STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

- Launch of redesigned website, which is more mobile responsive and available for live translation into multiple languages
- During the COVID-19 closure, staff performed **9,686** wellness checks via phone and email to Bergenfield residents. Staff notified residents about the library's virtual services as well as local social services information including the food bank @ the VFW hall
- Participated in grass-roots led Halloween "trick or treat." Though the Library was closed for the day, a cart was set up outside Clinton Avenue with free craft kits and books for children to take while they were out trick or treating
- Increased social media engagement on Facebook and Instagram about the Library's virtual branch and other services, resulting in a **27%** increase in followers

GOAL FIVE: INCREASE OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE, FISCAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- In anticipation of the challenges related to remote learning, the Library specifically purchased a new subscription to Brainfuse to assist Bergenfield students and parents. Brainfuse is a virtual tutoring platform that offers both real time live tutors as well as archived materials for K-12. This service is available for free to any Bergenfield resident who has a valid library card. Between 2pm-11pm each day, parents/students are able to log on and receive real time virtual help with homework assignments in all grades and subjects.
- Submitted proposal for NJ State Library Construction grant funds to renovate the Young Adult Room
- Registered the Library for participation in the NCPA (National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance) for future cost savings on purchases including computers, software and furniture.
- Research and development of PSE&G Energy Saver Direct Install Program to upgrade lighting and HVAC to energy efficient models
- Research and staff training of Passport Acceptance program
- Submission of COVID-19 related expenses for reimbursement by FEMA and Bergen County CARES grant

BERGENFIELD'S FRONT PORCH PROJECT

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Bergenfield, photographer (and Library administrative assistant) Jennifer Murray wanted to make a difference in her community. She launched the “Front Porch Project” for Bergenfield families who were safely isolating at home. Murray raised \$1,000 in donations from this photography project and 100% of the proceeds were donated to the Bergenfield Volunteer Ambulance Corps for their tireless work during this public health crisis. In addition, the Bergenfield Library was gifted one digital image of each family to share with the community.

The gallery below is a sample of Murray’s work – please do not use these images without permission.

For more information, visit <https://www.jenmurrayphotos.com/>



