

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

DEFIANCE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM  
DEFIANCE | SHERWOOD | HICKSVILLE



PREPARED BY DPLS ADMINISTRATION

-READ, CONNECT, GROW-

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2024 was a year of preparing to design and build the library annex across the street from the Defiance Public Library. The annex will provide badly needed space, including first-floor children's services with a checkout desk and a second-floor large meeting room available to the public, local government, and local nonprofits. The library system will be able to provide new services with additional space, including an adult literacy program and expanded local history services.



**Cara Potter**  
Director

The library engaged the Hodge Group for a 2024 fundraising feasibility study, a crucial step that involved interviewing local citizens, including those who may not have identified as library supporters, and collecting publicly available data on Defiance County and its citizens. The study, which was made possible by the active participation of the community, affirmed that the library could raise \$2 million dollars, the fundraising goal for constructing the annex. Time was also spent planning PR for a fundraising campaign. These efforts position the library to get to the meat of fundraising and building design in 2025. It's possible the library can prepare the building site in 2025 and start construction.

The DPLS Board of Trustees and Defiance residents value the community's past, including its historic buildings. I am proud that the library has remained in its original building for 120 years, well cared for and maintained; the library has a long history of caretaking and fiscal responsibility. The board, I, and library staff are grateful for the community's support as the library creates an expansion across the street, allowing us to keep the Carnegie building as the main library, open and accessible to the community. Generations of families have walked up and down the front steps of the Defiance Public Library. With the addition of an annex, that should continue for another 100-plus years.

## 2024 BY THE NUMBERS

Circulation of all physical materials

**196,007**

Circulation of all digital materials

**80,080**

Books borrowed from another library

**54,887**

Patron visits to the libraries

**73,093**

Programs offered

**753**

Program attendance

**14,091**

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Overall the Defiance Public Library System ended 2024 in a fiscally sound position. Expenditures were below budget amounts and actual revenues, resulting in an addition to the General Fund cash balance.

2024 was a year of declining state revenues for all Ohio libraries. DPLS distributions from the Public Library Fund decreased by 3.68% and revenue realized from the library system's levy was 4% below library estimates for the year. Investment income was higher than anticipated, offsetting some of the decrease in PLF and levy revenues. Overall, income was 2% lower than budgeted amounts, and 4% lower than in 2023.

In addition, the Chief Fiscal Officer served as Past Coordinator of the Ohio Library Council's (OLC) 2024 Library Accounting Division Action Council.



**Nancy Roehrig**  
Chief Fiscal Officer

OPERATING INCOME 2024		
PUBLIC LIBRARY FUND (STATE)	\$	1,564,331
LIBRARY LEVY (COUNTY)	\$	653,951
• TOTAL TAX REVENUE	\$	2,218,282
TOTAL STATE/FEDERAL GRANTS REVENUE	\$	3,031
OTHER OPERATING REVENUE (FINES, FEES, DONATIONS, INVESTMENT EARNINGS, ETC.)	\$	161,590
• TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE	\$	2,382,903
OPERATING EXPENDITURES 2024	\$	2,367,922
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES 2024	\$	38,208
TOTAL OVERALL EXPENDITURES	\$	2,406,130

## UPDATES, REPAIRS, & RENOVATIONS

### Defiance Public Library

- Security camera for NW corner of West Wing (paid for by donation)
- Canvas prints of DPL for main floor reference area

### Annex Project

- Fundraising feasibility study
- Project overview/planning consulting
- 315/319 Fort St. property donations and associated legal fees

### Sherwood Branch

- Replaced lighting in the main library, project room, bathrooms, back hallway and utility closet
- Manager's office moved to the back room

# ADULT, TEEN, & TECH SERVICES

## Adult Services

In 2024, adult services planned and facilitated 222 events with a total patron attendance of 3,250. Top events included:

- DefCom 9, with approximately 1,200 children, teens, and adults attending.
- Living History Encampment, in conjunction with RiverFest, brought in approximately 250 individuals to learn the history of Defiance County between 1790 and 1812.
- An adult and teen summer reading challenge with 187 individuals participating across the system.



**Renee Hopper**  
Adult, Teen, & Tech  
Services Manager



*Clockwise from top left: A large group enjoys learning about our past residents during the 2024 Riverside Cemetery Walk; Adult Services Associate Hilary Gabers presents on DPL's popular LitKit program during the 2024 Public Library Association conference in Columbus in April; Cosplayers and artists pack Northtowne Mall for the 9th annual DefCom Mini Comic Convention, which took place November 9.*

## Teen Services

Teen Services saw record numbers at Teen Night Thursday. Attendance averaged 26 teens each Thursday night; on our busiest night, we saw 43 teens in our Teen Space.

Because of the high attendance, Teen Tuesdays were added to the weekly event list in September; currently, the event averages 7 teens per night, and features a new theme each week of the month.

Other events geared to our teen patrons included a Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde teen lock-in, a Twilight-themed teen fan fiction writing contest, and ongoing programs such as Crafterteens, featuring a new craft monthly, and Crochet for a Cause, which invites teen patrons to tackle simple crochet projects to help those in need.



*Teen Librarian Pam Kranenburg leads young patrons on a 'Secrets of the Nile' teen lock-in adventure at Defiance Public Library.*

**"Teen Night Thursday" saw record attendance numbers in 2024.**

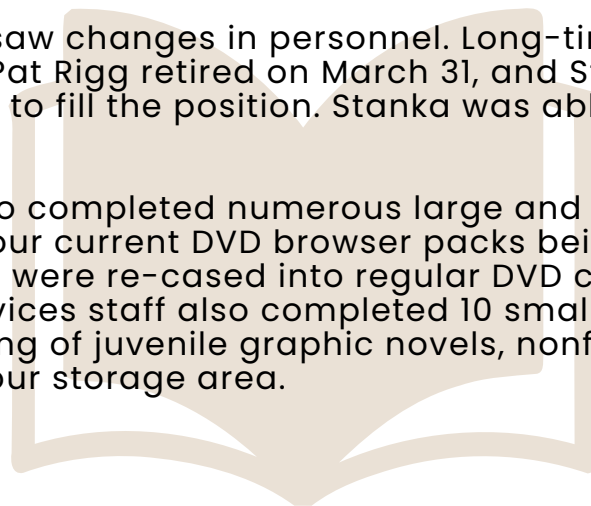


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## Technical Services

Technical Services saw changes in personnel. Long-time Technical Services Specialist Pat Rigg retired on March 31, and Stanka Volkman was hired in early March to fill the position. Stanka was able to train with Pat before she retired.

The department also completed numerous large and small projects for the system. Due to our current DVD browser packs being discontinued, 1,050 TV series DVDs were re-cased into regular DVD cases throughout 2024. Technical Services staff also completed 10 smaller projects that included recataloging of juvenile graphic novels, nonfiction series, and moving books into our storage area.



# THE MAKERSPACE

2024 for the MakerSpace has been a year of outreach and hosting groups. With 19 class visits, reaching over 1,700 students, the MakerSpace has connected with more families and shared what it has to offer. Many of these students then utilized the MakerSpace or attended a program such as STEAM camp.

Programming was selected based on patron requests and accumulated supplies. When the wreath-making waitlist exceeded 20 people, we scheduled 2 additional sessions.

Sewing is a popular class and has also brought about questions regarding fixing sewing machines. Since there are no local sewing machine repair shops, the MakerSpace has taken on learning the skills of basic maintenance and repair. With the help of a volunteer, we have been able to help fix other items during fix-it clinics. During both clinics and sewing machine maintenance the owner is shown how to do simple fixes for the future. A few other classes this year included paper beads, Japanese embroidery sashiko, nalbinding, fabric pumpkins, and eclipse shirts. A total of 81 program sessions were provided by the MakerSpace across the system and virtually. Maker kits are still popular, with an average of 108 taken monthly.

With the donation of the Bambu Carbon X1 3D printer, we have had an increase in quality and reduced print failures. The Bambu printer was the most used piece of equipment by patrons in the MakerSpace in 2024, followed by the Silhouette and Ellison.

Staff used the MakerSpace to put together the Halloween Parade float once again this year.



**Cara Bolley**  
Emerging Technology  
Lead



*From left: DPLS' 'Kiki's Delivery Service' float delighted at the 2024 Lions Club Halloween Parade; young patrons make new discoveries at STEAM camp; DPL's new, donated 3D printer has become the MakerSpace's most-used piece of equipment.*



# CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Children's Department celebrated several accomplishments, despite being short-staffed most of the year. Firstly, Storywalk Storytimes are a new type of program we began this year, garnering enthusiastic reception from patrons. Look for more of these in the future.

We also successfully improved our Summer Reading Challenge by providing books to all registrants. In previous years, participants needed to complete the challenge to receive a book. Receiving books upon registration creates a more equitable program and gets books into the homes of children who need them. It also provides motivation towards intrinsic rewards, which research proves is more successful in learning and forming habits like daily reading than extrinsic rewards. We also chose to give children charms to replace the book completion reward. Patron feedback verified these changes to be highly successful. Additionally, our completion rate was up by 35%



**Marja McGuire**  
DPL Children's Services  
Manager

Our updated and new book menus are another accomplishment this year. Book menus are brochures that offer guidance to patrons who need materials for certain topics or ages. The selection of book menus consists of books for kindergarten through grade six, concept books, media and apps, books aimed at diversity and inclusion, and books about disability awareness. They are on display throughout the department.

Another department highlight was a popular eclipse event in which both staff and patrons enjoyed participating. Staff and patrons were able to create and wear eclipse T-shirts in the days leading up to the event.

The Children's staff also won a decoration contest held by the Norweld Summer Reading Workshop with their elaborate diorama, which included lights and moving pieces. Many more accomplishments were seen in our everyday work and service to patrons.

**Total # of Programs: 166**

**School Visits: 41**

**Child Attendance at Programs: 7,944**

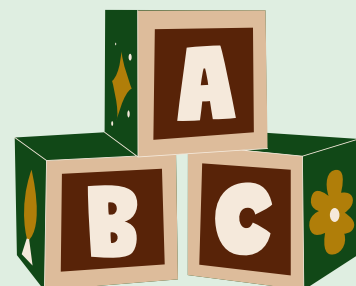
**Passive Activites: 60**

**Take-home Kits: 42**

**Community Outreach Information Bags: 1,125**

**Reference Transactions: 919**

**Directional Transactions: 3,399**



# CIRCULATION

In 2024, I trained staff for all three library locations. Training for Defiance consisted of a Children's Associate (Kalista), Circulation Associate (Savana), Sub (Hayley), and an Aide (Nita). Hayley is now a Branch Assistant in Sherwood, and Kalista is now a Branch Associate at Johnson Memorial Library.

We added three new passes to the Museum Pass Program last year, including passes to the Akron Zoo, Armstrong Air and Space Museum, and Science Central in Fort Wayne.

Several popular passes were renewed: The Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum, Fort Wayne Art Museum, and Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory, all located in Indiana. Museum passes are sponsored by the Friends of Defiance Public Library.

During the Summer Reading Challenge, circulation staff at DPL processed 287 new library cards for patrons. Staff delivered to approximately 24 homebound patrons each month. This includes individuals living in their homes as well as those in nursing facilities. A total of 3,571 items were delivered to these residents, including 1,702 books, 74 CDs, 992 DVDs, 198 audio books, 109 Play-a-Ways, and 496 magazines. Residents also enjoyed receiving various activities once a month including but not limited to coloring pages, word puzzles, brain teasers, and simple crafts.



**Tabitha Sullivan**  
Circulation  
Manager

# COMMUNICATIONS

In 2024, the communications coordinator created promotional artwork packages (flier, web, slideshow, and social graphics) for 163 events and programs across the system's three locations, issued 63 press releases, and sent out 12 monthly "Shelf Life" newsletters. **Past press releases and newsletters are available to view at [defiancelibrary.org](https://defiancelibrary.org).**

DPLS continued to have a lively, growing presence on social media in 2024, totalling 442.4K content views on Facebook alone. DPLS' main page garnered 623 new followers in 2024, reaching an estimated 188.4K individual users with our content. The opted-in mailing list also grew in 2024, with 904 new contacts added. With 17-28% considered a strong open rate for mass-marketing emails, DPLS logged an exceptional 38% open rate. There were 79,780 browsing sessions recorded on the DPLS website, marking a 16.8% increase over the previous year.

In addition, the Communications Coordinator served on the Safety, Annex Communications, DEF-COM, and Halloween Parade committees. As always, website maintenance and security received significant attention, and we are pleased to announce that new accessibility tools were integrated into the library's website, making it easier to use for those who may need translation, read-alouds, magnification, and much more. Read more about this project at [defiancelibrary.org/access](https://defiancelibrary.org/access).



**Taryn Lawson**  
Communications  
Coordinator



# SHERWOOD BRANCH

2024 brought significant changes to the Sherwood Branch. New LED lighting was installed in the restrooms, project room, and the main part of the library. The new lights have really brightened up the spaces and we are happy with the results. With the hire of new Branch Assistant Hayley Burnett, more desk space was needed for the branch associates. A temporary wall was constructed in the project room to divide the room to make an office for the branch manager. It was a large undertaking, however now that it is done it is a better, more productive workspace for all.

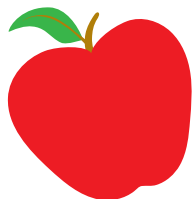


**Kathy Holtsberry**  
Branch Manager

We had more people enter the library again this year. A variety of programming was offered and attendance increased. Summer reading program participation grew. A program or activity was offered every day after lunch. Patrons enjoyed a visit with a sled dog, pirates, animals from Lily Creek, and a local petting zoo, along with many other activities. We are thankful for our Friends of the Sherwood Library for providing the funds to be able to invite presenters to our library.

Summer lunches continued to grow in numbers in 2024. Thanks to the generosity of local churches and community members, more than 1,600 brown bag lunches were distributed in June and July.

We continue to offer storytimes, adult and child crafting programming, as well as special programs including Cookies with Mrs. Claus. New programs included a very popular Dinos and Donuts event. Patrons listened to a dinosaur story, made crafts, played games and feasted on donuts and juice. Elf Academy was also a big hit. We trained 30 school-aged patrons in elf duties, including cookie decorating and jewelry making. In 2025 the branch staff will continue to provide the best programs and service that we can for our community.



MORE THAN 1,600 SUMMER LUNCHES  
FOR KIDS WERE DISTRIBUTED IN 2024!



*Left to right: Mrs. Claus shares a story with Sherwood's young patrons; musher Karen Land tells library visitors all about working with sled dogs; children enjoy Elf Academy at SBL.*

# JOHNSON MEMORIAL

One of the main things that needs to be mentioned about JML in 2024 is how much it physically changed on the outside. The giant water tower came down in the back and was replaced with a lush green lawn. In front, the tall evergreens that multiplied and blocked the windows were removed, giving the building more curb appeal and our Teen Space and Adult Non-fiction area more sunlight.



**Angela Powell**  
Branch Manager

In February and March, we became fully staffed! After training, this enabled us to get back to providing Spring programming such as Storytime, a Taylor Swift party, and clay making.

In April, the Friends had their Plant-n-Sip fundraiser which is always lovely. May got exciting when The Friends of the Johnson Memorial Library met with Jerry Overmier for the first time to kick off a large remodel project for the inside of the library.



*A young library-goer enjoys experimenting with the gourd piano during JML's annual Fall Fest.*

Of course, June and July are for the Summer Reading Challenge. We kept ourselves busy making sushi, eggrolls, and firefly houses. We hosted a band of pirates and Nature's Nursery. We hatched chickens, threw a planet party, dug for dino bones, and gave a presentation on the history of the cocktail!

In August we held a series of teen cooking classes. All in all, we held 19 classes with the Charlie Cart in 2024 for all ages.

JML loves the Fall and our annual Fall Fest. The Friends had their annual book sale at the start of October. We had our Fall Storytime, roasted pumpkin seeds, hosted a bee program, and went hiking on the new Hicksville Trail with the Boy Scouts and Defiance Soil and Water Conservation District.

Winter was quiet, with holiday crafts and cocoa. We started a passive bulletin board community project that has been a lot of fun, though it might take a while to finish the secret reveal!

## PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY OUR FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

These are just a few of the many free community programs and services sponsored by the libraries' three Friends groups in 2024.

### FRIENDS OF DEFIANCE PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Toledo Children's Theatre Workshop
- Roz Puppets
- Visit from Lily Creek Farms
- El Corazon de Mexico Ballet Folklorico
- Kids Zumba
- Bob Zeedyk Petting Zoo
- Reading Challenge prizes
- 1000 Books before Kindergarten Graduation
- DEFCOM-9
- Shelf Indulgence LitKits
- Hide-a-Book Day
- Living History Encampment
- YA LitKits
- Readers' Circle Book Club
- Mysteries & More Book Club
- Cemetery Walk
- Teen Lock-in
- Solar Eclipse Event
- Book sales
- Mush! with Noggin the Sled Dog
- Art in the Park
- Lions Club Halloween Parade Float
- Adventures in STEAM Day Camp

### FRIENDS OF SHERWOOD BRANCH LIBRARY

- Visit from Lily Creek Farms
- Trivia on Tap
- Book Sales
- Pirating 101
- Mush! with Noggin the Sled Dog
- Reading Challenge prizes
- Cookies with Mrs. Claus
- Snacks for various programs

### FRIENDS OF JOHNSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

- Charlie Cart mobile kitchen programming
- Plant-n-Sip Fundraiser
- Despicable Me Party
- Taylor Swift Party
- Annual Fall Fest
- Pirating 101
- Mush! with Noggin the Sled Dog
- Backyard Astronomy
- Planet Party

## THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 DONORS!

#### **\$5 - \$99.99**

- DHS Class of 1962
- Carol Ehlinger
- Phyllis Homier
- Helen Fry
- Cara Bolley
- Laura Rath Connor
- Pam Schaufele
- St. Paul's United Methodist Preschool

#### **\$100 - \$499.99**

- Carol Cramer
- Defiance Lions Club
- James & Cynthia Impton
- Lori Moore Heidrich

#### **\$500 - \$999.99**

- Ann Small
- Sherwood Masonic Lodge #620
- F.O.E. Ladies Auxiliary #2556

#### **\$1,000 - \$4,999.99**

- Friends of Johnson Memorial Library
- Friends of Sherwood Branch Library
- Geenex Solar

#### **\$5,000 & over**

- Friends of Defiance Public Library
- Terry Howarth



## 2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

**Laura Rath Connor - President - (Jan. 24, 2024 - Dec. 31, 2027)**

**Mary Elizabeth (Beth) Michel - Vice President - (Jan. 1, 2022 - Dec. 31, 2025)**

**Rebecca Mansel-Pleydell - Secretary - (Jan. 24, 2024 - Dec. 31, 2024)**

**Kenneth Boroff (Jan. 1, 2022 - Dec. 31, 2025)**

**Chris Korhn (Jan. 1, 2022 - Dec. 31, 2025)**

**Dennis Sobecki (Feb. 28, 2024 - Dec. 31, 2028)**

**Shari Hedge (Feb. 28, 2024 - Dec. 31, 2027)**

## A Note from the President

Library services in Defiance County began over 150 years ago, but the role they play has changed significantly since the early days. Initially, books were accessible only to the librarian. The patron would ask for the book they wanted and the librarian would pick it off the shelf for them.

Over the decades, the Defiance Public Library System has continually changed and evolved to meet the needs of its patrons. It has expanded from the original Defiance location to additional facilities in Hicksville and Sherwood. Now, there are programs for toddlers, kids, teens, and adults. There are multiple book clubs, a chess club, the History Buffs local history group, and more. Other services include a growing summer lunch program in Sherwood and homebound delivery service for those unable to visit the library.

Some people question the need for libraries today. I ask you to look at all our libraries have to offer and review the statistics found in this report that show a continued increase in library usage. It is obvious the system continues to be a vital and integral presence in Defiance County.

The Board of Trustees continues to work toward the construction and completion of an annex building to meet today's needs of the county's residents. This building would allow for system-wide improvements and increased services, such as an adult literacy program in each community and expansion of local history services for the branches.

A review of the past year's successes is great motivation to work hard to make more improvements to DPLS for all Defiance County residents.

**Laura Rath Connor**  
**President, Defiance Public Library System Board of Trustees**