



D&O NEWS

Vol. 1 Issue 2

October-November 2019

Hello, Fellow DOers!

The **Diversity and Outreach Section** has been hard at work planning our second annual DO-IT Conference in March 2020. Check out this newsletter to see what we're up to and how you can get involved.

Upcoming meetings:

Thursday, October XX, 11am-1pm @ XXPL

Thursday, November XX, 11am-1pm @ XXPL

Thu., December 19, 11am-1pm @ Cherry Hill Public Library *Joint meeting with Urban Libraries!*

A Word from the D&O President:

I'm very excited to serve as your current NJLA D&O President. My name is David Perez, and I'm a bilingual library social worker at the Long Branch Free Public Library. I'm the first social worker hired directly by an NJ public library. After serving as a social work intern at LBPL for two years while earning my MSW from Monmouth University, I was offered a full time position. I believe library social work is a social innovation.

As D&O president, I look forward to working together with our section leaders to provide to the NJ library community clear communication and vision when it comes to the sustainability of our programs and community impact. Diversity and outreach implies community engagement. As a library social worker, community engagement is not only my daily function, but my passion.

Our NJ communities are extremely diverse, and we know that nationwide, libraries thrive when our diversity is embraced and celebrated. Our library patrons are equally critical to the sustainability and effectiveness of our library programs. Libraries are "home" to many homeless patrons. Children, families, and community members value our community space as integral to literacy, whether through books, computers, English classes, citizenship classes, cultural celebrations, employment services, reentry services, etc.

At present, your D&O section is actively working on bringing you our second annual DO-IT Conference at Monmouth University in March 2020 (Date TBD) The theme of the conference will be Library Social Work. I am thrilled to announce our Keynote Speaker, Sarah Johnson, MLIS, LMSW, who works for the New York Public Library as well as Hunter College. Sarah is a national voice on all things library social work. We will provide more information as we accomplish more and get closer to the new year.

Calling all Bookmobiles!

Does your library have a bookmobile, mobile library, or pop-up library? Send in some photos and a few paragraphs and have it featured in our bimonthly Bookmobile Spotlight.

Doing a great diversity or outreach program?

Tell us about it! Each month we will highlight a different program from libraries across the state. No program or initiative is too small. Be sure to send pictures as well as dates and times of programs.

Contact Us

For more information or to submit stories and ideas please contact:

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*Join us at our next meeting!
Agendas, Minutes, and more at
njlamembers.org/dosection*

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BOOKMOBILE SPOTLIGHT



Every month, we're shining a light on Mobile Libraries: one of the best ways we bring the library to the community.

Jersey City Free Public Library Bookmobile

Kara Brehm, Outreach Librarian

with help from the staff of the Jersey City Free Public Library

On March 15th, 1954 the **Jersey City Free Public Library** debuted their first Bookmobile, a Blue Bird bus with about 1,500 items available to patrons. The Bookmobile quickly became a staple in the community providing patrons with a convenient way to access library materials.

After 21 years of service and nearly one million items circulated, the Blue Bird was retired and a new Bookmobile was dedicated on May 14, 1976. With an expanded route, this vehicle was in service until September 1990, when a third Bookmobile got on the road.

Throughout the history of the Bookmobile in Jersey City, the community has rallied to modernize and upgrade the vehicle when needed. In 2002, thanks to the support of The Provident Bank, Goldman Sachs, and East Coast Collision, Inc. of Jersey City, the Bookmobile received a new chassis, fresh paint and lettering, and a new generator.

By 2005, the Bookmobile was ready to be replaced and the Jersey City Free Public Library Foundation Board of Trustees set to work getting funding for a brand new vehicle. Library Foundation Executive Director Priscilla Gardner and then-Treasurer Michael A. Ryan spearheaded the fundraising and design of the new Bookmobile. On May 8th, 2008, three years after fundraising began, the brand new, custom-designed Bookmobile debuted at the 5th Annual Casino Night & Silent Auction fundraiser held at Casino in the Park, a legendary restaurant in historical Lincoln Park. Because of the fundraising efforts and the donations from local corporate, non-profit, and individual supporters, the \$220,000 cost of the Bookmobile was fully funded without using tax-payer dollars.

With public access computers, a media station with a DVD player, restrooms, and enough shelf space for 2,000 materials, including a large collection of diverse books, the brand new 33-foot-long Bookmobile was well received by the community. The Bookmobile accommodates patrons of all abilities with a retractable elevator lift hidden behind moveable bookshelves, maximizing space while still providing access for patrons.

As of 2019, the Bookmobile visits 30 stops and anyone with a Jersey City Free Public Library card can check out and return materials at any of the stops. The Bookmobile continues to be a beloved asset in the community.

"The Jersey City Free Public Library is committed to reaching all Jersey City residents, even those who are not always able to reach their nearest branch easily," said Library Director Priscilla Gardner. "Our Bookmobile helps us to do just that, with a regular schedule that includes stops at day care centers, schools, and community hubs throughout the city."

Last year, the Bookmobile served nearly 7,000 residents and circulated almost 8,000 books. The Bookmobile is also an important resource for patrons to get their library card. In 2018, more than 1,500



1954-1976
*Original
Bookmobile*

2008-present
*Current
Bookmobile*



2008
*A Jersey City resident
showcases the
Bookmobile's accessibility*

2008
*Former Jersey City Mayor
Jerramiah Healy and
JCFPL Library Director
Priscilla Gardner*



Fostering Community for Special Needs Adults at SCLSNJ

Jennifer Sulligan, Adult Services Librarian

Out of a growing demand for recreational and social programming for special needs adults, the Somerset County Library System debuted system-wide special needs programming for adults this past summer. The effort was spearheaded by the library system's Special Needs Committee, consisting of adult services librarians and administration, which decided to try this pilot program for a year and see how it fared.

In the Spring, each of the library system's branches was tasked with planning to host at least one **Special Needs Social Hour** per month. The marketing department recognized the importance of this initiative, so they agreed to create last-minute publicity for it, even though the deadline for summer marketing had passed.



Some of the participants at a Special Needs Social Hour at the Manville Branch

As a result of the variety of community, need, staff, and resources at the ten SCLSNJ branches, each Social Hour offers something new and different to participants. At the Manville branch, we are visited by many local group homes and day programs for special needs adults. While laying the groundwork for the special needs events at my branch, I took into account the schedules of these programs; they always came to the library during the daytime hours, usually between 10am and 2pm. The group leaders were happy to offer input on preferred times, which was quite helpful.



As a department of one, my top priority, besides serving the special needs community, is to make this effort sustainable for me. I do not have extra staff to assist participants with the activities, very little resources to cobble together, and not a lot of time to plan. As a former art major, art is my forte, so I'd already decided that most of the meetings would involve a craft or creating artwork of some kind. A local resident with a therapy dog offered to come to the majority of the Social Hours. Simple STEM activities, scavenger hunts, Bingo, and maker opportunities round out the schedule. The idea isn't to wow participants with elaborate plans, but to encourage them to have a good time, interact, and have positive experiences in the library.

It's still early in the pilot, but so far the programming effort has been remarkably successful here at the Manville Branch—registration for upcoming Social Hours is currently full! In addition to the Social Hours, I've also put together an adult coloring program, "Coloring With Friends," and a Game Club, both of which meet during the day, are open to all, and are advertised as sensory friendly.

In the three months since the initiative has been in play, I have witnessed new friends being made, old friends meeting up, seniors teaching special needs adults how to play Skip-Bo, participants from two day programs getting together to play Hangman using our whiteboard, a table full of people working on an adult coloring page together, a very timid adult hugging a visiting therapy dog, and too many smiles to count.

As I type this, my Game Club is meeting. They no longer need me to direct the meeting, and relish the independence. Two tables full of special needs adults, along with their caregivers, are involved in an intense game of UNO, and they cannot contain their laughter... and it is music to my happy librarian ears.