



LIBRARY NEWS

Sharing stories of Georgia libraries transforming lives and communities

Volume 20, Issue 1, Fall 2022

Public Libraries
help Georgians
grow their
businesses



Also in this issue...

Alliance Theatre passes now
available at public libraries

Keep learning at the library,
no matter your age or interests



GEORGIA PUBLIC
LIBRARY SERVICE

Public libraries help Georgians **grow** businesses

Public libraries support small businesses in ways as varied as the stories of the individual entrepreneurs whose vision and hard work launched the businesses in the first place.

One of these ways is the free high-speed wi-fi available at all 408 public libraries across every county in Georgia. This connectivity enables individuals to get online and get work done. Many libraries also provide meeting rooms and private work spaces; online jobs skills, workforce development, and entrepreneur training; learning resources; the ability to check out laptops or hotspots; and of course books on every topic imaginable.

It was the Clarkesville Library's gardening section that helped Kelli Dunlap find the knowledge she needed to start a more sustainable life. She left her job in higher education and moved with her family from Florida to rural Clarkesville, Georgia, to start a flower farm.

"I was daydreaming about living closer to my extended family and starting my own business," said Kelli. "I've always loved gardening, and during our weekly trips to the library, I'd wander to the gardening section. It was through these books that I discovered a community of gardeners and farmers that I could learn from to start my business. The library offers a wealth of books and resources that continue to help me learn more and grow my flower farm."

She currently sells flowers through her business, Farm of the Rising Sun, at two retail locations - a local produce market and a gift shop. She and other local growers are hoping to start a farmers market. During the busy summer and fall growing months, she puts up a roadside stand on the busy road near her home.

Her summer crop included dahlias, sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, gladiolas, and snapdragons, grown under or along the high tunnel on her property. She, her husband, and two young children share their five acres of land with a family of chickens, five roosters, a cat, and a dog.

It was her first spring growing tulips and daffodils at volume, and she plans to double or triple her plants for next year. Life is much slower and more meaningful for her outside the office world.



Photo by Deborah Hakes



The know-how gained from the library, a member of the Northeast Georgia Regional Library System, helped Kelli create a better life for her family.

“Flowers offer a love language, a feeling,” she said. “I see it when I hand off flowers to a customer, or when someone sends me a message of gratitude. In our small town, word travels fastest by word of mouth, and that has helped me a lot.”

On a recent weekday, she took a mason jar that she had neatly wrapped in brown parchment paper and filled with zinnias, snapdragons, and other flower stems to the library as a thank-you gift. The flowers sat prominently on the front desk, and as patrons checked out books, many asked the staff where the arrangement came from. As Kelli browsed books nearby, individuals would walk over to ask directly where they could buy her flowers.

“Georgia’s public libraries play such an important role in supporting local economic and workforce development efforts in many innovative and uniquely local ways,” said State Librarian Julie Walker. “Our libraries connect small business owners and job seekers with library resources to learn skills and grow businesses.”

Kelli and her husband have recently purchased a second business to provide dog boarding services. “You can probably guess where I’ve been looking for resources to learn more,” she said.

FREE LIBRARY WI-FI AND MEETING ROOMS HELP ENTREPRENEUR BUILD BUSINESS

Gary Kuhlmann launched Spydervserve Web Services as

a side project in 2007 and then as a fulltime business in 2015. The high-speed wi-fi access, as well as spaces that he could use to work and meet clients, available at the South Georgia Regional Library in Valdosta helped him get his start. Spydervserve Web Services helps other regional businesses with their websites, email, and more in south Georgia and northern Florida.

“I could check out a key for a private work space at the library,” said Gary. “I worked there two to three days a week until I finally leased an office in 2020. I still go there for meetings; I even bought my house in part due to its proximity to the library!”

The library also has a business resource center equipped with meeting spaces and computers, as well as laptops available for checkout to use at home or within the building. The local chamber of Commerce partners with the library to host classes on small business start-up, sustainability, and other topics.

“Small business owners should know that their local library likely offers workshops to teach you about starting and operating a business,” said Gary. “The library helped me so many times with having a place to meet clients, as well as a quiet area to work when needed. Add in the quick and easily accessible internet, and the library pretty much has everything business owners could ever need.”

LEADERS BUILD LEADERS SERIES OFFERS START-UP GUIDANCE

The Rockmart Public Library, part of the Sara Hightower Regional Library System, offers patrons customized guidance through the business start-up process



Photos by Deborah Hakes

through a series of workshops called Leaders Build Leaders.

“This program is a blend of community need and patron request,” said Karen Thompson, branch manager of the Rockmart Public Library, located an hour west of Atlanta. “We partnered with our local chamber of commerce to create a program that helps new start-ups through the process of establishing their business and then connects them with community resources to help them succeed.”

Participants so far include a cleaning company, massage therapist, personal shopping company, and consulting agency, among others. The program meets monthly and features presentations from area businesses.

The success of the series has inspired other branches in the library system to explore offering similar programs.

“Rockmart’s community rallies behind small business owners, and a healthy downtown business community impacts the city at large,” said Thompson. “We want our community strong and our patrons successful. The library can play a key role in this cycle.”

TRADE SKILLS TRAINING FIRST OF ITS KIND AT LIBRARY

The Clayton County Library System offers patrons free access to trade skills training through Interplay Learning.

Interplay offers online, on-demand courses featuring virtual reality and 3D simulations to learn how to be an electrician or plumber, repair commercial and residential HVAC, conduct facilities maintenance, and many other disciplines. Courses are available in English and Spanish.

“Interplay Learning is a great fit for our community,” said Marquita Gooch-Voyd, former assistant library director with Clayton County Library System. “This program introduces rising high-school seniors to an alternative path of education if they don’t want to pursue or cannot afford a college degree.”



Photo by Bernard Buleanu

“The library pretty much has everything business owners could ever need.”

Gary Kuhlmann
Owner, Spyderserve Web Services

Because the library’s Interplay licenses have continuing education credits, program participants can submit the credits to a trade school and shorten the time required to complete a trade program. These courses are also applicable for already certified trade people to receive recertification.

Georgia Public Library Service, the state library, supports local economies by providing resources to all 411 of the state’s public libraries such as the free online Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative and Learning Express Job and Career Accelerator and by providing crucial high-speed internet and Wi-Fi access. These statewide resources complement the local offerings by many libraries. Learn more about how you can grow your business at the library at www.georgialibraries.org. ■

Public libraries are *good* for **BUSINESS**

Public libraries support local economies through free high speed wi-fi at all 411 locations across every county in Georgia.

Many public libraries provide:

- Meeting rooms and private work spaces
- Online jobs skills, workforce development, and entrepreneur training
- Laptops or wi-fi hotspots for checkout

Start or grow your business at the public library.

www.georgialibraries.org/business





Courtesy of Alliance Theatre

Library card holders can now check out a pass for free tickets to Alliance Theatre productions

The Georgia Public Library Service's new partnership with the Alliance Theatre enables patrons to check out passes for free tickets to certain Theatre performances. Since it launched in May 2022, the pass has provided 448 free admissions to see *Trading Places* and 511 to see *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*. Patrons from as far north as Catoosa County and as far south as Brooks County have used the pass.

The Georgia Public Libraries Community Ticket Pass is available at all public libraries statewide. When checked out just like a book, patrons visit the Alliance website and utilize the pass to receive up to four free tickets to performances.

"The Alliance Theatre is thrilled to partner with Georgia Public Library Service to provide public library patrons with free access to our core productions," said Margarita Kompelmakher, director of community partnerships and engagement at the Alliance Theatre. "It is particularly important to us that this is a statewide program and that the opportunity now exists for a family

to visit Atlanta for a day trip and know they can count on an amazing live performance at the Alliance Theatre as part of that experience."

The Community Ticket Pass is an opportunity for Georgia residents to be introduced to and experience the art of theatrical performances they may not otherwise have been able to. It also provides the Alliance an opportunity to reach Georgians in an entirely new way.

The pass joins a family of passes available to patrons that provide free or reduced cost admissions to educational and recreational organizations statewide.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Alliance Theatre for allowing us such unique access to their rich selection of culturally and artistically immersive performances," said Julie Walker, vice chancellor for libraries and archives.

Ask your librarian about the pass or visit georgialibraries.org for more information. ■

Accessibility is the priority at Cobb County Public Library

The new Accessibility Services Room at Switzer Library in Cobb County, Georgia, offers patrons a place to use assistive technology like screen readers and magnifiers, listen to talking books, or find disability resources.

There is an affirmation board, where people can share messages of gratitude and encouragement. A flier on the door shares information about weekly events for special needs patrons. And both kid- and adult-sized comfortable chairs offer an opportunity for a quiet, cozy place to read.

Cobb County Public Library has made meeting the needs of the underserved in their community a priority.

“A lot of our day is spent listening to our patrons,” said Renaté Elliott, library services supervisor for Accessibility Services.

“They often seek us out to say hello, share an achievement, tell a funny story, give and receive a hug, or even just to vent. I love these moments because we learn so much about each other, and I always walk away with an idea for another service area.”

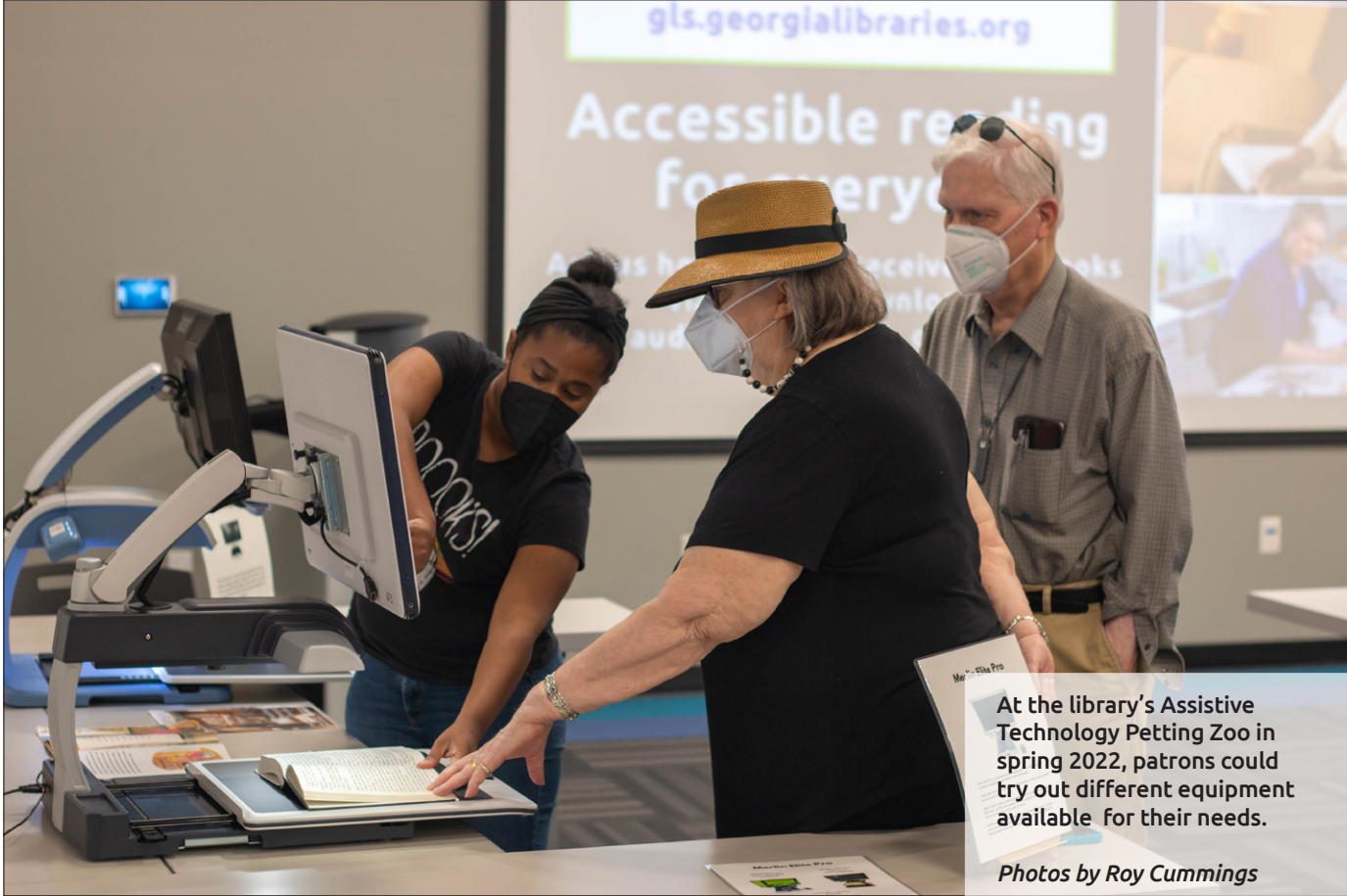
Her workday consists of assisting patrons with tasks like applying for employment, services, or housing online; answering questions about what resources are available for a specific disability, for example how to sign up for the Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled or recreational services, how to access medical equipment or find educational services; and educating herself on assistive technology devices, including ones the library doesn't own yet.

Cobb County Public Library began its focus on special needs populations in 2014, when the Windy Hill Therapeutic Center Library opened within the Cobb



I love the look on a person's face when they realize that the library has thought about their needs, that coming here isn't going to be a challenge.”

Renaté Elliott
Library services supervisor, Accessibility Services



County PARKS Therapeutic Center. The center provides adult day care for those 18 and over who have a disability and need recreational, social, and skill-building activities, and so the library was a natural fit there. In 2019, the library expanded its programs to also serve the general public, not just attendees of the adult day care center.

Renaté managed the library beginning in 2016, and she built a series of creative programs for patrons. In 2020, the Cobb library system formally established the disability and accessibility services department, to be led by Renaté. It would be housed in the renovated and expanded Switzer Library, the headquarters of Cobb's 15-library system.

"We recognized that accessibility needed to become a priority for our library," she said. "We were not taking into consideration the needs of an entire population of people. Disability doesn't have an age limit. We needed to provide services

beyond those who attend adult day care. We also needed to include kids, as well as young adults who graduated from high school but are not quite ready for college or a job. We wanted to prioritize inclusion across the board."

Renaté relocated the programs and services to the dedicated Accessibility Services Room at Switzer, where she and other librarians provide a warm, welcoming, and safe environment for people with special needs.

They have developed local partnerships with other organizations with similar missions such as Mobile Audiology, We Care Veterans, and Georgia Relay.

The library also works with the Cobb County School District's Special Education Department and has hosted Georgia Tech's Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation for virtual programming.

During limited services at the height of the COVID-19 pandem-

ic, the library partnered with the Behavior Analysis & Intervention Center (BAIC) to provide 100 free sensory boxes to support students pivoting to online learning.

Renaté serves as an ambassador to the Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (GLS). As an Ambassador, she promotes free services for the blind and print disabled to patrons and offers ideas and collaborative opportunities back to GLS in order to expand the population they are able to serve.

The library created an unofficial advisory board of patrons who provide feedback, suggestions, and insight, for example the need for a finance program specific to those who are newly independent but unsure how to manage money. Renaté and the advisory board work to connect the resources that are available in the community for those with a disability and to have the library be a central place for all of these resources.

“I want our libraries to be a welcoming place for all, regardless of individual circumstances.”

Helen Poyer
Director of Cobb County Public Library

“We can be a bridge for people to learn about disability services,” said Renaté.

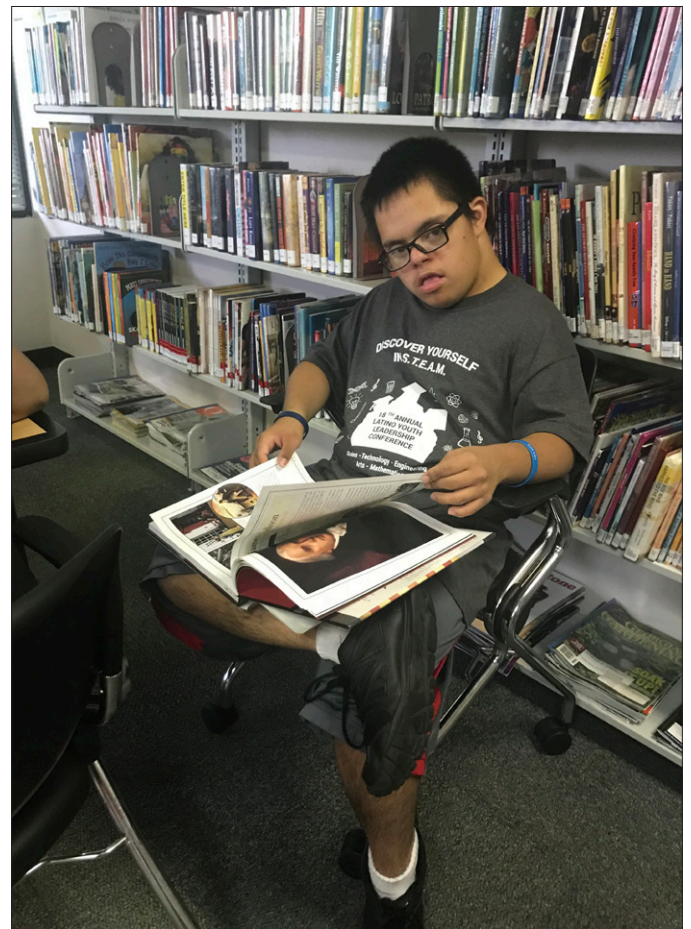
Her favorite part of the job is finding solutions to problems for the people they serve. “I love the look on a person’s face when they realize that the library has thought about their needs, that coming here isn’t going to be a challenge,” she said.

As an example, she mentioned patrons who didn’t enjoy reading because it was a challenge due to a learning or vision disability. As a librarian, she is able to recognize and find ways to remove the barriers through the accessibility resources they offer.

“I want our libraries to be a welcoming place for all, regardless of individual circumstances,” said Helen Poyer, director of Cobb County Public Library. “Renaté and other team members are making a difference in the lives of the people they serve. They are making a difference in our communities.”

Many public libraries across Georgia offer accessible technology, services, and programming.

You can learn more about accessible library services at <https://georgialibraries.org/gls-accessibility>. ■



A summer camp participant from the special needs camp run by the PARKS Department in Cobb County. “This patron really enjoyed visiting the library space at the Windy Hill Community Center to read historical books!” said Renaté Elliott.

Photo courtesy of Cobb County Public Library



At left, patrons Sean and Kevin create their projects at the Switzer Library’s Valentine’s Day Sip and Paint, where patrons enjoyed sparkling cider, fruit, cheese and crackers while painting on canvas.

Photo courtesy of Cobb County Public Library

Keep learning at the library, no matter your age or interests

Whether beginning kindergarten, graduating high school, starting a career, or finding a new interest in retirement, public libraries have resources to help learners of all ages succeed.

Your local public library is your key to lifelong learning.

This list is just a sampling of the many resources and services available for the entire family. Contact your local public library to learn about everything available.

Story times

In addition to learning to read, these fun read-along sessions can help children gain cognitive and social skills while making new friends.

eRead Kids

Our free digital library for kids offers more than 20,000 electronic and audio books for children from pre-k through fourth grade. You just need your library card number and PIN.

Makerspaces

A makerspace is a collaborative work space for making, learning, exploring, and sharing that uses no-tech to high-tech tools.

These spaces are open to kids, adults, and entrepreneurs and have a variety of maker equipment including 3D printers, virtual reality glasses, Legos, paint sets, soldering irons, and even sewing machines.

Family Passes and Partnerships

With your free library card, you can check out passes for free or reduced-cost entry to places like Zoo Atlanta, Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites, The Center for Puppetry

Arts, and more. Through partnerships with organizations across the state, Georgia's public libraries provide families with educational and recreational opportunities to spend time together while saving money. These partnerships are popular, and some are seasonal, so check with your local library for availability.

Many public library resources are available online, so you can access wherever you happen to be.

Discover your next job, career, or educational step at your local library. Learn more at georgialibraries.org

GALILEO, Georgia's virtual library

Use GALILEO to access articles, ebooks, historical documents and photos, and much more. Go to <https://galileo.usg.edu> and enter your public library system password or PINES card number.

LearningExpress Library

This interactive online platform features practice tests, tutorials, and ebooks for job search and workplace skills improvement, career certification and licensing exam preparation, college and graduate school admissions exams, GED exam preparation, and basic skills improvement in reading, writing,

and math for all ages. You can even practice for your Citizenship Exam.

MANGO Languages

Mango Languages includes over 72 on-demand language courses. Whether studying for class or a hobby, Mango Languages' easy-to-follow tutorials are your key to learning a language.

Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative

Free online Entrepreneurial Mindset Training will help you turn a business idea into reality.

This self-paced program is available to all Georgia public library patrons.

EBSCO Learning Express Job and Career Accelerator

Explore occupations, search jobs and internships, create a resume and cover letter, master interview techniques, and more.

HeritageQuest

HeritageQuest Online provides genealogical and historical sources for more than 60 countries as far back as the 1700s.

Gale LegalForms

Gale LegalForms can help you understand common legal procedures through customizable legal documents that you can easily modify to create accurate, reliable forms without stress. Forms are accessible online, mobile responsive, and downloadable.

History Reference Center

Covering both U.S. and world history topics, History Reference Center is a full-text database featuring historical reference books, magazines, journals and thousands of primary source documents. ■



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2872 Woodcock Blvd, Suite 250
Atlanta, GA 30341

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CONTACT US

Georgia Public Library Service

2872 Woodcock Blvd, Suite 250
Atlanta, GA 30341
(404) 235-7200

www.georgialibraries.org

Julie Walker, state librarian

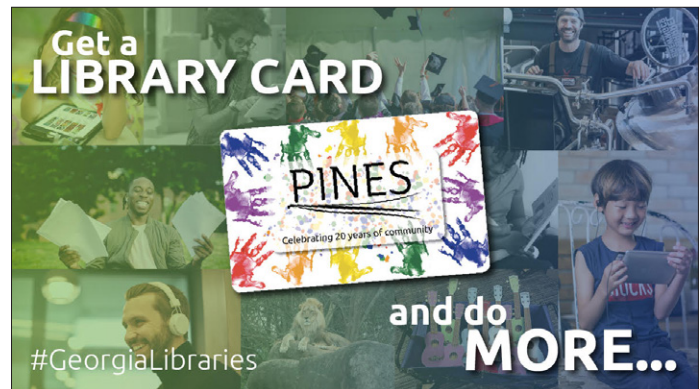
Deborah Hakes, editor
dhakes@georgialibraries.org

Roy Cummings, contributor

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Information presented in this newsletter will be provided in alternative formats on request. For more information about Georgia's libraries, visit georgialibraries.org



Your free Georgia public library card is the key to discovering and learning at your library, online and at great places around the state.

Learn more at www.georgialibraries.org/READ.