

## Books for Babies

It's never too early for children to learn the joy of books! The Friends want to give every new Portland baby a free "Books for Babies" kit. Each kit contains

- o A high-quality board book
- o Welcome packet for Portland Library's 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program
- o Baby's First Library Card – exchange it at the library for the real thing
- o *Books for Babies* brochure and bookmark with reading tips
- o *Babies Need Words Every Day* booklist
- o *Babies Love Books: A Guide for Grown-ups* brochure
- o A brochure describing what babies can do - newborn to 18 months

To receive a free "Books for Babies" kit, please contact

- o Jennifer Renk, Supervisor of Youth Services, Portland Library;
- o Town Clerk's Office, Portland Town Hall, 33 East Main Street; or
- o Marilyn White at [atwmsw@sbcglobal.net](mailto:atwmsw@sbcglobal.net).

Under FPL Board Member Marilyn White's leadership, FPL has distributed almost 300 kits to Portland families over the past seven years. FPL pays the full cost of Books for Babies kits, BookFlix early literacy software, and 1,000 Books program prizes. Thanks to our members for helping us help Portland's youngest readers!

## What's New?

FPL has supported Portland Library for almost 50 years, but we are constantly looking for ways to improve the efficiency of all we do.

This year, for the first time, we are pleased to offer our more tech-savvy members the chance to donate via Venmo. Donors with Venmo accounts can simply scan the QR code on the enclosed form and specify a donation amount. No form, envelope or stamp needed!

Speaking of stamps, with the cost of postage rising several times each year, FPL will now send donor acknowledgments by email. Please provide your current email address when you fill out your 2025 Membership Form. By providing email acknowledgments and email reminders for FPL events, we can reduce FPL's administrative costs and devote every penny possible to supporting library programs. Thank you for helping us save money and reduce our organization's impact on the environment!



Follow us on Facebook!  
@ Friends of the Portland Library,  
Portland, CT

Check out FPL's website at  
[www.friendsofportlandlibraryct.org](http://www.friendsofportlandlibraryct.org)

## Adventures in Summer Reading

The theme for this year's Summer Reading Program was *Adventure Begins at Your Library* and, in keeping with this theme, Portland Library offered a full slate of fun and adventure for all participants from toddlers to seniors.

The library held 63 different programs for kids, teens, adults, and families throughout the summer, and 2,441 people attended these programs. Of course, as always, the centerpiece of the Summer Reading Program was books, and lots of reading was going on in Portland this summer. Children and teens (377 participants) read 20 minutes or more for a total of 7,750 reading days! Prizes included age-appropriate books, stuffed animals, 2,468 motivational charms, and tickets for special end-of-summer gift card raffles.

The adults did plenty of reading themselves. One hundred patrons participated in the Adult Summer Reading Program, reading more than 343,000 pages. Sixty-two patrons logged more than 2,000 pages, and six patrons read over 10,000 pages. One participant logged more than 15,000 pages! For the eighth straight year, our Adult Summer Reading Program participants were "reading for a cause." For every 250 pages read by an adult, FPL donated money toward funding instrument rental scholarships for two deserving Brownstone Intermediate School students for the 2024-2025 school year.

FPL is very pleased that, through the generous support of our many loyal members, we were once again able to pay the full cost of the library's Summer Reading Program. Our funding covered the cost of all events, the Brownstone instrument scholarships, and all prizes, program supplies and refreshments. A big "Thank You" to our FPL members for making all this possible. Thank you also to Jenn Renk, Patty Ballou and Michele Grzejszczak of Portland Library for planning and running fun and creative programs--and to the 33 teen volunteers who assisted them!

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## FPL Funds the "Extras" That Make Portland Library Even Better

Portland Library is a wonderful place. It's a bright and welcoming space filled with a beautifully curated collection of informative and entertaining materials. The library is also blessed with a top-notch staff; every staff member is friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. So, what does FPL add to Portland Library? FPL is a volunteer-based organization that raises money to support Portland Library, allowing the library to provide the "extra" programs and services that help to make the library even more special. In 2024 we budgeted more than \$30,000 for these important programs and services.

FPL funds the entire cost of the library's Summer Reading Programs, and a wide variety of programs for children, teens, adults and families held throughout the year. This year's offerings have included ukulele classes, a comedy magic show, a program on the "science of taste," visits from The Poop Museum and the Flash Mob Circus, a cartooning workshop, a resume workshop, drumming circles, and presentations on hummingbirds, coyotes, black bears, bird-friendly gardening, smartphone photography, "preserving your harvest" and the Red Sox/Yankees rivalry. In addition, FPL funded the lovely floral scene painted on the library's windows by talented local artist Aleksandra "Ola" Rucz. We also pay for the program supplies, craft materials and snacks for all children's and teen programs. And FPL funds the full cost of the BookFlix software that promotes literacy in young children. All told, FPL budgeted \$16,000 for children's, teen and adult programming in 2024.

The library's Museum Pass Program (funded entirely by the Friends) allows patrons to visit many local museums and attractions for free or at significantly discounted admission prices. For families with younger children, we offer passes to Lutz Children's Museum, Beardsley Zoo, and The Carousel Museum. Patrons who wish to explore Connecticut's rich history can choose from passes to Mystic Seaport, The Mark Twain House or Connecticut River Museum. Our portfolio also includes passes to four exceptional art museums, the New England Air Museum and the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. FPL budgeted \$2,000 for this program in 2024. See the article on page 2 for all the details.

E-books are much in demand by library patrons but, unfortunately, they remain very expensive for libraries to purchase. Over the past several years, FPL has funded a large portfolio of e-book titles, and Portland residents get "first dibs" on the e-books we purchase.

FPL also finances the full cost of Portland Library's impressive DVD collection. From *Godzilla* to *Citizen Kane*, from *Kung Fu Panda* to *Three Musketeers*, from *Mad Max* to *La Boheme*, the library's collection contains something for everyone. Collectively, FPL budgeted \$10,000 for e-book and DVD purchases in 2024.

This year, the Friends expanded our support of the library with several new projects. First, we funded the construction of a handcrafted "cozy cube" for the children's area. The sunny yellow cube has an open design to give kids privacy or a sensory break while keeping them in easy view. FPL also purchased hundreds of books (titles selected by the library's Supervisor of Youth Services) that we distribute free to children at town events. And finally, we made our first contributions to the library's new "Library of Things"—a djembe drum (used in drumming circles) and a ukulele! We look forward to financing additional items for this unique collection in 2025 and beyond.

FPL also continues to fund artist receptions and the library's Staff Appreciation program, which allows each staff member to select an item to add to the library's collection. And each holiday season FPL purchases hundreds of high-quality, age-appropriate books for infants, children and teens served by the Portland Food Bank.

All these programs are possible only because of our members' unwavering and generous support. Please join FPL (or renew your membership) today using the enclosed membership form or our Venmo QR code. With your help, FPL will continue providing the "extras" that help make Portland Library even more special for many years to come.



## Art Shows at the Library

Portland Library's Mary Flood Room has been home to a series of wonderful art shows in 2024. Winter shows included mesmerizing "snowpaintings" by Jennifer Hart and beautiful wall hangings and rugs by Carol Ingram. In spring, talented artists from Portland Secondary Schools displayed their art during Youth Art Month. Summer brought the acrylic and oil paintings of Portland native Paula Lee, and an autumn show featured the stunning nature photography of FPL Executive Board Member Janet Lopes.

We look forward to more shows in the coming year. Currently scheduled shows include:

December – Christopher Graham, Portland photographer. Reception: December 14, 1-3 pm

February – JLS Gangwisch, Prints. Reception: February 1, 1-3 pm (Snow Date: February 8)

March – Youth Art Month Exhibit featuring the art of talented students from Portland Secondary Schools. Reception: March 20, 4-6 pm (Snow Date: March 27)

May - Maria Fisher, Animal Paintings. Reception: TBD

Please check the *Rivereast News Bulletin* for further information regarding featured artists and reception dates and times. The Friends provide homemade baked goods and beverages at all receptions.

Area artists interested in exhibiting their artwork in the Mary Flood Room should contact the library administrative team at [ppladmin@portlandct.org](mailto:ppladmin@portlandct.org).

## Museum Pass Program

Looking for family entertainment that won't cost an arm and a leg? With Portland Library's Museum Pass Program, you can visit many local museums or attractions for free or at significantly reduced admission prices. Here is a list of available passes:

### Free Admission

Connecticut River Museum  
Connecticut's Old State House  
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art  
FloGris Museum (formerly Florence Griswold Museum)  
New Britain Museum of American Art  
**The Carousel Museum+**  
Wadsworth Atheneum

### Reduced Admission

Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo  
Lutz Children's Museum  
The Mark Twain House & Museum  
Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame  
Mystic Seaport  
New England Air Museum

**+ Featured Pass!** The Carousel Museum, located just 30 minutes from Portland in Bristol, Connecticut, houses well over 100 antique wooden carousel animals, a carving workshop, a restoration area, and its very own working carousel. The pass provides free admission for four people.

All passes are funded by Friends of the Portland Library. Passes can be reserved at [portlandlibraryct.org](http://portlandlibraryct.org), by phone (860-342-6770) or by visiting Portland Library. Most passes can be printed at home from the library's website.

## Award-Winning Collaboration

In the fall of 2023, the Mary Flood Room was home to a show highlighting the artistic talents of a group of people who devote a great deal of time working to support and improve Portland Library—staff members, Library Board members and FPL Executive Board members. The show was a multimedia extravaganza that included paintings, photography, baskets, bookbinding, woodworking, published novels, and even exquisite bridal gowns. The show was a great success, made even better in June 2024 when the Friends of Connecticut Libraries ("FOCL") honored FPL and this innovative show with its Focused Project Award for municipalities with a population of less than 15,000.

FPL accepted the award at FOCL's Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony held on June 15 at Avon Public Library. Although the show was originally inspired by FPL Board member Maria Eiler and expertly curated by Lucinda Patrick, another FPL Board member, it was a true collaborative effort. Working on the project was a great opportunity for library staff, Library Board members and FPL Board members to get to know one another better. Community support was wonderful, and the show and the reception helped reinforce Portland Library's role as an essential community center for the town and its citizens.

The collaborative art show and the resulting award are just the latest example in a long history of the town's Library Board, FPL and library staff working together to support Portland Library. In 2012, FPL joined with the Library Board to finance a complete overhaul of the library's teen area. New carpet, shelving and furniture gave the area an updated look providing Portland's teens with a comfortable and functional place to call their own. The groups' investments have withstood the test of time, and the teen area remains a welcoming and much-used section of the library.

You probably have noticed the beautiful window murals that adorn the library's windows throughout the year. The murals, painted by talented local artist Aleksandra "Ola" Rucz, change three or four times a year, and Jenn Renk, the library's Supervisor of Youth Services, works with Ola to design fun and original scenes. Over the years, the murals have featured jungle scenes, oceanscapes, brightly colored flower gardens, and seasonal displays featuring whimsical woodland creatures. FPL and the Library Board work together to fund the full cost of these wonderful murals.

This year, Library Board member and accomplished craftsman Don Eiler designed and constructed the impressive "cozy cube" for the children's area, and FPL paid for the materials. For Portland Library's 125th Anniversary Celebration held in 2022, the Library Board planned and ran the event while FPL funded much of the entertainment and our Board members oversaw the games. At town events such as this past June's Quarry Celebration and the annual Halloween on Main Street celebration, FPL distributes free children's books to attendees (titles selected by the library's Supervisor of Youth Services) while Library Board and FPL Board members work together at the events to promote the library. Members of both Boards participate in the hiring process for key library staff positions. And the Library Director serves as an ex-officio member on both the Library Board and the FPL Board, while the President of FPL's Board and the Chair of the Library Board are each ex-officio members of the other organization's Board.

Over the decades, library staff, Library Board members and FPL Executive Board members have formed a successful partnership that has made Portland Library better and stronger. The bonds of this partnership will help the library thrive throughout the decades to come.

## FPL Book Sales—All Year Long!

Many of you may have recently attended the Friends' **Fall Book Sale**, which took place at the library from October 18-20. It's our signature event of the year, and we are so grateful to the hundreds of members and area residents who come out to support FPL, as well as the dozens of volunteers who help make this major undertaking possible.

But you can buy quality books at bargain prices every day in the Friends' Second Hand Prose Book Sale area of the library. We have mysteries, general fiction, non-fiction, romance, young adult and children's books, and DVDs. Many items are like new and would make great gifts. Hardcover books sell for \$2.00 and trade paperbacks cost \$1.00. DVDs, mass market paperbacks, books for children and young adults, and discarded books from the library's collection all sell for only \$0.50 each. New treasures arrive each week.

FPL also holds several targeted book sales in the Book Sale area throughout the year. Next up is the **Holiday Book Store**, our month-long sale of gift-quality used books including adult and children's holiday books, which begins on **Monday, December 2nd**. During **June and July**, patrons can stock up on paperback books for their vacation reading at the annual **Books for the Beach** sale. At various times throughout the year, we often have a large inventory of discarded library books.

All proceeds from FPL book sales benefit programs funded by the Friends, including e-book and DVD purchases, the Museum Pass Program, Books for Babies Program, Summer Reading Programs, and the purchase of early literacy software for the library.

## Join Us!

Want to help support Portland Library? Join FPL's Executive Board! We are looking for new members with fresh ideas and a bit of free time. The Board meets once a month and runs FPL's book sales, Read & Recycle Collections and Artist Receptions. We also decide how money raised through our Membership Drive and book sales is allocated. Contact Monica Jensen at [monicajensenrn@gmail.com](mailto:monicajensenrn@gmail.com) for more information. Help us support Portland Library!

## Upcoming Read & Recycle Collections

In 2025, FPL will collect gently used books, DVDs, CDs, puzzles and games on the following dates:

- Saturday, January 11
- Saturday, March 29
- Saturday, June 14
- Saturday, September 13

Our "Read & Recycle" collections will be held from 10 to Noon in the Library's Mary Flood Room. All donated items must be in "sellable" condition. We cannot accept items that are dirty, moldy or in poor condition. No textbooks, business books, computer books, VHS videos, cassette tapes or magazines, please. Thank you for your support!