



**MT. LEBANON**  
**PUBLIC**  
**LIBRARY**

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**2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

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MT. LEBANON PUBLIC LIBRARY

# OUR VISION

**M**t. Lebanon Public Library, located in a community that aspires to be safe, welcoming, connected, and dynamic, offers MORE: learning, laughter, exploration, and empowerment.

# OUR MISSION

**M**t Lebanon Public Library (MLPL) will provide for all patrons an inclusive, welcoming environment of intellectual enrichment, creativity and enjoyment, and a forum to exchange ideas by providing top-tier programs, materials, services, and community support.

- **PROGRAMS:** To provide program participants of all ages with culturally rich, broadly representative and authentic programs by presenters that represent the diversity of our community and world.
- **MATERIALS:** To provide robust, dynamic collections of physical and electronic resources from diverse perspectives and voices that meet the needs of today's patrons, from young children to seniors. To provide access to up-to-date technology resources and to educate patrons in their use.
- **SERVICE:** To build a dedicated, informed team of library staff members who will create a welcoming and inclusive environment based on mutual respect, honesty, and accountability. To provide safe and accessible physical and virtual spaces that meet the needs of our patrons.
- **COMMUNITY:** To support our community through partnerships with civic groups and organizations and involvement in local events. To actively work with schools and learning institutions. To consciously promote inclusion and equitable treatment of all patrons, volunteers, and staff members. To work with community schools, partners, and other entities to encourage diversity within the community.

## LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**T**he board of trustees is a seven-member governing board. Each member is eligible to serve two three-year terms and is appointed by the municipality of Mt. Lebanon. The board's duties include advocacy, policy adoption and revision, and general support.

### **2021 BOARD**

- **Evan Jones, President**
- **Mary Menk, Vice-President**
- **Lorna Kearns, Secretary**
- **Marcia Taylor, Treasurer**
- **Christine Menand**
- **Eve Reynolds**
- **Bob Taylor**

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

*"Never be afraid to turn the page; there is a whole book ahead."*  
— Omar Sharif

Although at times it felt like 2020 never ended, the 2021 calendar year for us was a new chapter in the COVID-19 pandemic, if not yet a new book. Within the ebb and flow of the coronavirus cases, the library focused on making efforts to move forward and provide even more programming, services, and resources while keeping staff and patrons safe.

The characters in our library story struggled with ever-shifting masking requirements, ever-changing library services and hours, and the ever-present worry for family, friends, and personal health. However, we worked together to complete a strategic plan that focused on making our library even more welcoming and accessible. We moved outside the walls to meet our patrons where we could—from grab 'n go craft bags and Farmers' Markets to preschools and street fairs. We became experts at virtual programming and beefed up our virtual resources while making browsing in the library easy and fun again. Through it all, we kept our library's vision to offer MORE in mind and celebrated another rewarding and successful year.

Although as I write this the pandemic chapters of our lives aren't yet over, the resilience and experience we have gained during this time will serve us well in the chapters ahead—including 2022, Mt. Lebanon Public Library's 90th anniversary year. We will continue to prevail over this ongoing adversity with flexibility, strength, and pride in our accomplishments.



Robyn E. Vittek, Director



**Library Director Robyn Vittek, at left, with Mt. Lebanon High School senior Alaina Smith, the 2021 David Kenneth Held Memorial Scholarship recipient.**

## STRATEGIC PLAN

After emerging from the COVID-19 crisis, the Library Board and staff recognized the need to move the library forward deliberately in order to continue providing amazing library service in a changed environment. Library Director Robyn Vittek spearheaded the process to create a strategic plan with each segment of the plan carefully considered by all parties involved in collaboration. The committee sought feedback about library trends and initiatives from other library directors and key stakeholders, incorporated feedback from the library's Harwood Institute Community Conversations, and participated in exercises to determine shared values and training needs. The committee created a new vision and mission statement as well as SMART strategic actions to realize the library's mission. Emphasis was given to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion, green practices, and improved communication with community partners.

The board will review the plan twice yearly to celebrate accomplishments, add new actions, and ensure relevance. After working for months with the entire library staff, the Board of Trustees, and Municipal Manager Keith McGill, the Library Board approved the strategic plan on June 15, 2021. Board President Evan Jones and Robyn Vittek presented the plan to the Mt. Lebanon Commissioners on June 22, 2021.

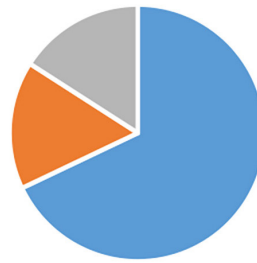
### THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING COLLABORATORS:

- Library Administration Team: Robyn Vittek, Sharon Bruni, Jeremy White, Nick Kish
- Library Board of Trustees and Library Staff
- Library Board Commission Liaison Leeann Foster, Municipal Manager Keith McGill, and Assistant Municipal Manager Ian McMeans
- Consultant Rex Gatto of Gatto Associates LLC
- Friends of the Mt. Lebanon Library Board President Susan Tracey

# 2021 OPERATION REVENUE & SUPPORT



- Mt. Lebanon
- State (includes table gaming funds)
- Regional Asset District
- Other (Donations, Grants, Fines and Fees)
- Utilities, maintenance, etc



- Salaries and benefits
- Books and other collection expenses
- Supplies, maintenance, and other operating expenses

2021 Operation Revenue and Support		
Mt. Lebanon	1,470,530	61%
State (includes table gaming funds)	133,152	6%
Regional Asset District	361,652	15%
Other (Donations, Grants, Fines and Fees)	201,405	8%
Utilities, maintenance, etc	244,603	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,411,342</b>	<b>100%</b>

2021 Operating Expenditures		
Salaries and benefits	1,569,579	68%
Books and other collection expenses	372,920	16%
Supplies, maintenance, and other operating expenses	367,820	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,310,319</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SOCIAL MEDIA & E-NEWS

**M**t. Lebanon Public Library's social media following continued to grow in 2021 with Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and e-newsletters and e-blasts serving as important avenues to get information out to the public accurately and quickly. Our social media also served as a way to keep patrons up-to-date on services, programs, and our collection. Facebook followers increased nearly 5 percent in 2021. By year's end we had 1,387 Instagram followers and 1,576 Twitter followers. Our e-newsletters and e-blasts went out to more than 3,300 subscribers.

After the COVID-19 quarantines ended and the library reopened to the public, we changed the name of our Facebook group from "Mt Lebanon Library Alone-Together" to "Lebo Reads." People use the group to discuss books, share reading suggestions, and post book-related tidbits. The group grew by 15 percent in 2021. A "Question of the Month" kept people engaged, and we selected one responder at random monthly to win a prize (usually books donated by The Book Cellar).

# OUR VALUE

Even with COVID-19 related hurdles and complications, Mt. Lebanon Public Library continued to offer exceptional value to the community.

In 2021, the cost per resident for Mt. Lebanon Public Library services was **\$50.33\***. That's the cost of a couple hardback bestsellers.

\*based on municipal funding only (not RAD, State, or table gaming)

5,084



reference questions  
answered

8,463



uses of library computers

113,275



interlibrary loan items  
provided to other libraries

668,672



total circulation for 2021

469,216



books borrowed

132,484



e-books, & audio/video  
circulated

14,992

adults, teens, children attended



1,771

live & virtual programs

16,720



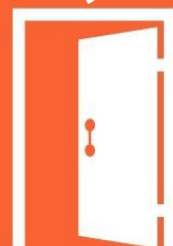
active library card holders

1,391



recorded programs

140,122



library visits

# PATRON SUPPORT

## A FEW OF THE MANY COMMENTS WE RECEIVED THIS YEAR

- I love studying here! Thank you guys for all you do!
- Auggie picked up his prize bag today. It is so great! You really nailed what a 7th grader would like in a prize bag. Our library has always been great, but the addition of a teen library has been such a positive change. Thank you for all you do!
- We love how creative you have been through all of this! We love all you do! Thank you!
- What a wonderful presentation! Dr. Roberts is a gifted speaker and an admirable intellect who seems devoted to the truth. Thanks to her for finding and sharing these little-known historical facts, and thanks to you for bringing her to us.



- Thank you for the generosity of the library in funding the Hannibal Johnson program. As always, you lead one of the community's biggest assets.
- I'm writing to express appreciation of Ms. Rachel's help in the children's section of Mt. Lebanon Library earlier this week. Rachel was an incredible resource for us and spent a considerable amount of time putting together an age-appropriate collection in a variety of formats. We walked out with FOURTEEN books that my son and I are enjoying and that we are finding quite helpful. I really appreciate Rachel's kindness, knowledgeability and enthusiasm. Thank you for a fantastic experience!
- I enjoy coming here... everyone is very kind and helpful.

## GRANTS & AWARDS

We are grateful to the **Kathryn DiNardo Foundation** for their continued support of Mt. Lebanon Public Library's Speaker Series. Their generous annual grant of \$10,000 will allow the Speaker Series to continue to offer inspiring and informative Speaker Series events moving forward.

We also wish to thank **Matt's Maker Space** for their ongoing support of our STEAM Programs, the **Jack Buncher Foundation** for their tremendous generosity in supporting the county-wide Love Your Library fundraising campaign, **Allegheny County Library Association**



for its support of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programming, and the **Mt. Lebanon Community Foundation** and the **Helene Bush Trust** for their support of our adult programming with their generous contributions to Mt. Lebanon Public Library.

Finally, we wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to the **Friends of Mt. Lebanon Public Library** for their tremendous ongoing support of the library. Through their generosity the library is able to maintain our Book Stop and Media Stop collections as well as present a wide selection of diverse programs.

# FACILITIES UPGRADES

**T**he library roof was replaced in 2021 and now sports a new white membrane surface that reflects instead of absorbs heat to help with cooling in the warmer months. Roofing insulation was increased as well to meet current energy codes, driving down the demand on heating and cooling systems in the facility, further reducing energy consumption.

Working with municipal IT and Public Works departments and using Keystone Grant funds, the library implemented fob-based Access Controls, which puts the library in line with other municipal buildings and increases security.

Installing doors and dividers in our formerly open study carrel rooms created four new quiet study rooms for public use.

We moved our magazines collection nearer our fiction section to make room for an expanded display area. New tables were purchased for displays.



**Regular maintenance included window washing. This crew made the windows sparkle while making staff smile.**



**TOP: We did some rearranging—moving the magazines to newly installed shelves (top)—to create more space for special displays. ABOVE: The children's library closed for a few days during the installation of a new roof; but we moved a number of children's items to the adult library and refreshed them often to provide the public with continued access.**

# FRIENDS OF MT LEBANON LIBRARY

2021 was another year of change and challenge for the Friends of the Mt. Lebanon Public Library. Sadly, our president, David McKibben, passed away in early January, and we were still operating under the constraints of COVID-19. In response to these challenges, our fundraising opportunities were both bold and creative.

One of the first things we did as a board was to amend the bylaws to include a succession plan. We also reorganized the board.

The Friends' online shop thrived in 2021 with sales of \$11,558. While the sales are quantifiable, they are not yet predictable. Mandy Mitchell and Susan Bloom continue to manage the online shop. The online shop is at: [mt-lebanon-book-cellar.myshopify.com](https://mt-lebanon-book-cellar.myshopify.com). With the success and the profitability of using Shopify, we ceased using Amazon in the fall of 2021.

Our plant sale date was changed from the same day as the Garden Tour to the Saturday before Mother's Day. In addition to the plants donated by our local gardeners, we sold plants from Janoski's, a local farm, and from the Bidwell Center. The majority of the plants were presold and picked up prior to or day-of the sale, but we had extra plants available for the sale. The sale was held on the front lawn of the library and included a book table, a raffle basket table, and a table with flower pots and bird houses decorated by volunteers. The sale raised \$6,500.

Throughout the year, we were continually measuring risk vs. safety to determine our ability to open the Book Cellar store. On June 29, we reopened with limited hours. Of our 124 volunteers, 42



*The Book Cellar used book store reopened June 29, and sales have been brisk.*

returned. As risk lessened, more volunteers returned. Between June 29 and December 31, Book Cellar sales totaled \$22,800.

We took part in the one-day Give Big Pittsburgh event, receiving \$3,215 in donations.

Our annual January beer event went virtual. We partnered with Hitchhiker Brewery, who sold special packs of beer to "attendees." The event raised more than \$2,000.

We had planned for a live September beer event in the courtyard—and sold out in one day—but we were forced to cancel when COVID-19 numbers skyrocketed. Tickets were refunded, but we received \$120 in donations. The Beer events were co-chaired by M.A. Jackson and Bob Hagerty.

—Susan Tracey  
President

## FRIENDS BOARD

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**Harold Hall, Vice President**

**Eileen Jacobs, Secretary**

**Jennifer Bibb Hisdorf, Treasurer**

**Cherie Moshier**

## BOOK CELLAR COORDINATORS

**Susan Tracey**

**Judi McCarthy**

**Eileen Jacobs**

**Barbara Doherty**

**Mandy Mitchell**

**Susan Bloom**

# PARTNERSHIPS

In 2021, we continued our partnerships with, among others: the Career Development Center at the JFCS Pittsburgh, Family Hospice, Himalayan Institute, Veterans Breakfast Club, the Alzheimer's Association, League of Women Voters, Literacy Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Children's Museum, the Heinz History Center, Mt. Lebanon Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society of Western PA, and the Historical Society of Mount Lebanon.

Other partnerships include:

- Matt's Maker Space funded a fourth Year of Making at the library.
- Mt Lebanon Partnership's Love Lebo Learning Series, a video collection that

focused on local businesses.

- Denis Theatre Foundation and the League of Women Voters worked in collaboration with us to plan and implement a Democracy in America series.

Working with the Mt. Lebanon DEI Committee, we helped celebrate Juneteenth and Lebo Green for Earth Day.



# SPEAKERS

**Caroline Kim** joined us via Zoom in June to discuss her latest short story collection, *The Prince of Mournful Thoughts and Other Stories*, which explores what it means to be human through the Korean diaspora. Caroline won the 2020 Drue Heinz Literature Prize.

In September, author **Hannibal B. Johnson (pictured at right)**, author of *Black Wall Street 100: An American City Grapples with its Historical Racial Trauma* and chair of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission, spoke at Mt. Lebanon High School to commemorate the centenary of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921. The event, co-sponsored by the Historical Society of Mount Lebanon, included an informal discussion with Mt. Lebanon High School History teacher Pete DiNardo.



**Beth Kissileff**, co-editor of *Bound in the Bond of Life: Pittsburgh Writers Reflect on the Tree of Life Tragedy*, joined us via Zoom in October to commemorate the third anniversary of the Squirrel Hill Tree of Life Tragedy in which a lone gunman killed 11 people and injured six more in the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in American history. The essays in the *Bound in the Bond of Life* anthology—written by local journalists, academics, spiritual leaders, and other community members—reveal a city's attempts to come to terms with an unfathomable horror.



In November, **Dr. Alaina E. Roberts (pictured at right)**—author, University of Pittsburgh history professor, and Phillis Wheatly Book Award winning author—spoke at Mt. Lebanon High School about her recently released award winning book *I've Been Here All the While*, which examines the complex history of Indigenous and Black People in Oklahoma in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The event was co-sponsored by the Mount Lebanon Historical Society.

# TURNING THE PAGE

**T**urning a page in the COVID-19 pandemic chapter of our library's story, 2021 was a year when the library staff were better equipped to navigate the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff experimented with ways to expand the virtual program experience by utilizing web cameras and encouraging more audience participation in virtual live events.

Early in the year when we were operating with fewer hours, our staff curated surprise bags with themes such as Zen in a Bag and Armchair Travel Adventures, which allowed us to bring the browsing experience home to our patrons through contact-free pickup. In the Children's Library, we continued to offer Book Bundles even after the library was open to the public. People love being able to fill out an online form in the wee hours after the kids go to bed and pick up a bag of books the next day.

Our children's virtual story times resumed a regular, weekly schedule and were uploaded to the website so patrons could go back and watch as they wish. For example, the Halloween story time recording from 2020 continued to get hits through 2021. One parent recently told a librarian that they discovered her archived recorded story times and watched them daily.

Mid-year brought a return to full service hours, a few weeks of lowered restrictions and the expansion of some outdoor programs and gatherings. Throughout the summer we held our library-wide summer reading program for all ages with multiple weekly virtual events for adults, as well as in-person outdoor events such as our popular Concerts in the Courtyard series.

Library staff participated in First Friday events

throughout the summer, and hosted a craft booth and book sale at the Mt. Lebanon Artists' Market in October. Library staff also interacted with families at the Lions Club's Farmers' Market.

In August, we formally paid our respects to beloved former Friends of the Mt. Lebanon Public Library president and long-time library supporter, David McKibben, in a memorial service and Rose Expo at the Mt. Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Story times and preschool outreach moved out

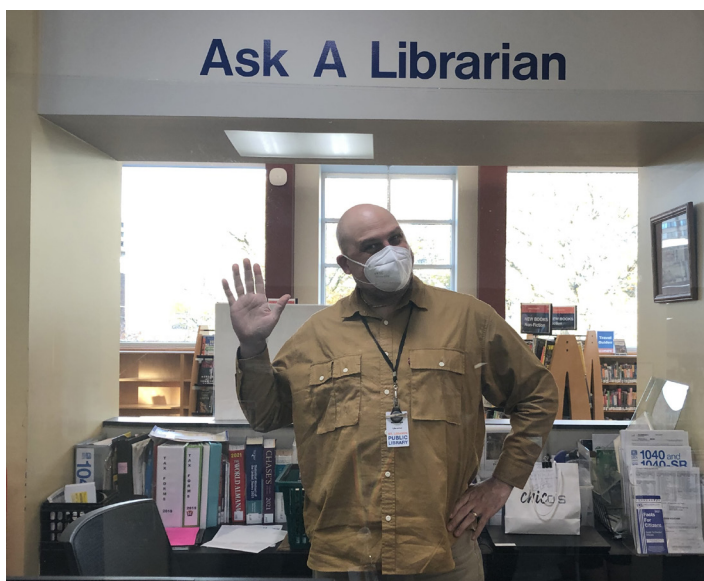
to the courtyard in the fall. The kids spent a lot of time looking at faces and watching each other. We made it nine weeks in a row outside, which is saying a lot in Pittsburgh!

One week, two little girls were playing with the flannel board after story time, sharing the pieces and delighting in putting them on the board. One of the girls very gently reached out and touched the other girl's hand and smiled. Her mother told a librarian through tears that it was

the first time her daughter had ever played with another child.

Our youth book groups and the teen "Mental Health Mondays" program also moved to the courtyard in the fall. Thanks to the addition of bistro lighting and personal camping lanterns, we were able to meet regularly outside in a safe environment. The kids (and adults) really loved having "courtyard classes."

In 2021, we never did get 'back to normal,' but were able to move forward from our 2020 "Open While Closed" operations. Library staff continued to adapt to an ever-changing environment and by remaining flexible and creative, provided patrons with needed programs, materials, and services.



***Librarian Eric Meisberger and the rest of our staff are always ready to help!***

**T**he Mt. Lebanon Public Library Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Mt. Lebanon Public Library, and the library staff offer sincere thanks to the generous individuals, organizations, and foundations that contributed to the library in 2021. Each gift, no matter the size, is important in helping our library carry out its mission and serve the community. We are grateful for the unflagging support of our many donors. Thank you!

Great care has been taken in preparing these lists to ensure they are accurate. If you believe there is an error, please contact the library at 412-531-1912.

## **DONORS WHO SUPPORTED THE 2021 ANNUAL APPEAL**

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- Alan & Bunny Schorr (for providing engaging zoom programs and access to ACORN).
- Helen Palascak in honor of the librarians who chose the Kanopy and Acorn digital subscriptions
- Helen Palascak in honor of Ginnie Fickman

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- M. Paula Fitzgerald
- Valerie Blue

thank  
you!

# THE YEAR IN PHOTOS



*In October, staff and board members dressed in costume to march in the municipality's annual Pumpkin Patch Parade.*



*Better than Google: Our reference librarians provide help—and answers to all questions—with a smile. From left: Laurie Schultz, Elizabeth Krebs, Sharon Bruni, Sarah McGowan, Sharon Verminski-Wilson. Not pictured: Eric Meisberger.*



*Our Concerts in the Courtyard series resumed Thursday nights in August.*



**Our spring plant sale raised \$6,494. Pictured are sale chair Linda Binek, left, and library board member Christine Menand.**



**Our courtyard, which is a certified Wildlife Habitat, draws people as well as bunnies, squirrels, and the occasional heron.**



**The spring and fall plant sales filled Room A with color (and lots of woolly caterpillars!). The spring sale raised \$6,494; the fall sale \$2,530.**



**We used the exterior of the library for Nature Bingo, a teen Harry Potter Trivia Walk, a Halloween obstacle course, and other fun activities for children and teens.**



**We officially went fine free in June after having stopped collecting fines in March 2020.**



**Our Casual Classical series in the courtyard showcased young local musicians performing informal concerts.**

# THE YEAR IN PHOTOS: CHILDREN'S



**With COVID-19 cases on the rise, we moved our Halloween festivities to the courtyard and parking lot. We offered several stations with different activities—from story times to crafts—at each one.**



**With meeting rooms and story time room closed due to COVID-19, our outside spaces proved invaluable. Above, Librarian “Miss Elizabeth” Schwertfuehrer hosts a story time in the courtyard.**



**Our children’s staff will find the right book for every kid no matter his or her age! Seated: Connie Mathews and Dana Jones. Standing from left: Elizabeth Schwertfuehrer, Katie Donahoe, Rachel Blier, Holly Visnesky, Bev Wilhelm.**



**Children’s Librarian Rachel Blier works the craft table at the Mt. Lebanon Artist Market in October. INSET: A finished project.**



**We took our children’s puppet shows out on the road. Here Librarian Connie Mathews entertains some children at a Beverly Road First Friday event.**



**Children’s Librarians Rachel Blier (front) and Dana Jones paint a Halloween obstacle course on the sidewalks surrounding the library.**