

WRL NEWS

January-March 2024

The WRL team hit the ground running this year, introducing more popular services and technology to users and strategizing to expand popular programs in 2024. WRL remains committed to continuously reinventing library services and enhancing user experiences, making it the top priority in our strategic plan. Another key focus this year is working towards new and refurbished library facilities; public restroom renovations are currently underway at the James City County Library, construction of a natural playground is planned to begin later this year behind the James City County Library, and the City of Williamsburg will soon begin the design process for a new building to replace the existing Williamsburg Library. To stay updated on the progress of these new developments, consider joining WRL's email list for periodic updates on the new buildings by [clicking this link](#). Here's to the exciting new ventures ahead this year!

- Sandy Towers, Interim Library Director

WRL Playground Project

Let's go play outside - at the library! An innovative new natural landscape playground project is underway at WRL's James City County Library, supported by a partnership between the Friends of WRL and the Colonial Capital, Toano, and Williamsburg Kiwanis Clubs. This fun play area will encourage children of all ages to connect to the natural world in a way that stimulates their imagination, cognitive skills, and development in an outdoor environment. The Friends of WRL and the local Kiwanis clubs are currently fundraising for this special outdoor space, which is expected to begin construction this year. Learn more about how you can be part of this project at wrl.org/wrl-playground. *(The image depicts an established playground designed by the same company that created WRL's design.)*

One Book One Community

“*The Displacements* is a suspenseful story that offers a chance for readers to reflect on the causes and ramifications of intensifying extreme weather events on society. We hope this novel will spark thoughtful discussions on how we can care for our community now and into the future.” - Sandy Towers, Interim Library Director

Library users contemplated the aftermath of an extreme weather event for 2024’s One Book One Community read, *The Displacements* by Bruce Holsinger. This suspenseful story tackles intensifying weather events and possible impacts on the modern world. Participants explored the book’s themes during March programs which offered information about disaster preparedness, activities like pottery making and virtual reality experiences, and opportunities for in-depth discussions. The event series culminated in the author’s visit to the library. If you missed that event, a video will be available soon on the One Book webpage at wrl.org/onebook. The 5th annual One Book One Community Read was made possible with support by the Friends of WRL Foundation and William & Mary Libraries.

New Tech to Check Out

This winter, readers curled up at home with WRL’s newest expansion to its Library of Things, e-readers! With just a library card, users can borrow a Kindle Fire pre-loaded with digital reading subscriptions to Kindle Unlimited and Everand (formerly Scribd). Users can explore ebooks, eaudio, and more for a checkout period of 21 days. The addition of WRL e-readers builds on the success of WRLtv, a collection of Roku and Amazon Firestick devices available for checkout. WRLtv, which now offers Spanish-language channels including Univision Now, Telemundo, and ViX, is just another way the library offers users the most popular new technology and services.

2024 Youth Art Show

The 3rd annual Youth Art Show launched in March, welcoming middle school and high school students in the community to submit a work of art to be displayed in the WRL Gallery at the Stryker Center. To celebrate their artistic achievement, WRL held a special

reception on March 22 for participants and their families. Students with winning entries received cash prizes, made possible by the generous support from the Friends of WRL Foundation. This year, thanks to the Youth Art Show's popularity, WRL will introduce two additional youth contests related to the arts, focusing on poetry and fiction writing.

Sensory Corner

To enrich and improve the library experience for neurodiverse children, WRL created a custom-built sensory corner inside the Kiwanis Kids Idea Studio at the James City County Library. This busy children's museum-like space can sometimes be overstimulating, so the new area provides a quiet place where children can look at a calming giant bubble tube, touch TAP-TAP lights and light ropes, play with fidget toys, and relax in a quieter, lower light area. Other sensory-related items at WRL include sensory bags available to borrow while inside a library building, as well as sensory play items available for checkout from the Learning to Go collection!

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