



Inspiring and nurturing a vibrant community through exceptional library services.

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Events Calendar

Newsletter Sign up

WRL NEWS

January-March 2025

There's a lot of exciting momentum regarding new library spaces, and we're thrilled to share some big updates on library building projects currently underway—each one led by the localities in which they're located. While these projects are not managed by Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL), we're proud to collaborate closely with our partners in the City of Williamsburg and James City County as they work to shape the future of library service in our community.

In the City of Williamsburg, the process to design and build a replacement downtown library took a major step forward in 2024 with the issuance of a Solicited Conceptual Phase Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure RFP. After reviewing proposals from three respondents, the City Council—supported by the expertise of a construction management firm—asked the City Manager to form an evaluation committee. That group, which included representatives from the WRL Board of Trustees, Friends of WRL Foundation Board, City staff, and WRL staff, recommended moving forward with Hourigan Construction. City Council has since authorized negotiations for an Interim Agreement to begin the design process, which will include future opportunities for public input.

In James City County, expanding library services has long been a priority, and we're pleased to see forward progress on a potential new library. The County's Board of Supervisors recently approved an agreement to begin programming and schematic design for a library as part of the proposed consolidated Government Center at 5231 Longhill Road. The County has tasked Henderson/Gilbane with leading this design work, a key step in addressing the library system's space shortage and supporting our growing population. We're eager to see what comes next and to continue advocating for a library that meets the evolving needs of our community.

And there's more good news from WRL, especially for families and caregivers of children. James City County has awarded a contract to GC Commercial to construct a natural landscape playground at the James City County Library. This will be funded by

the Friend of WRL Foundation and donation from Kiwanis Club of Marion, Kiwanis Club of Toano, and Kiwanis Club of Williamsburg, as well as other private funders. We're excited to see this project get underway, with completion set in fall of 2025. Photos, video, and updates on the playground design can be found on the [WRL website](#).

We're grateful to our local government partners for their investment in library access, and to the Friends and others for supporting this new playground. We look forward to supporting the project every step of the way. Stay tuned for more updates – and thank you for being part of the WRL story.

- Sandy Towers, Library Director

One Book One Community

***“Where I Can’t Follow* is a compelling and deeply moving story that sheds light on the struggles of addiction and poverty in Appalachian communities. By reading this book together, we hope that our community will engage in meaningful conversations about resilience and hope while gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges many individuals continue to face.” - Sandy Towers, Library Director**



Library users are often faced with difficult, relevant topics through the 2025 One Book One Community read, *Where I Can't Follow* by critically acclaimed author Ashley Boomgard. This powerful novel tackles the challenges of poverty, joblessness, and addiction through the eyes of Marion, a woman faced with the choice to leave her hometown through a door never to return. Participants joined a series of book discussions and a documentary screening on generational addiction in Appalachian communities. Great authors are joined about dementia with Dementia Friends Community and earned a certificate for their commitment to supporting those with the disease.

The vibrant, richly narrated author visit in the library theater. If you missed the author visit, it is now available to [watch online](#). The 6th Annual One Book One Community Read was made possible with support by the Friends of WRL Foundation and Williams & Mary Libraries.

Battle of the Books n



Our goal with Battle of the Books is to create a positive and encouraging environment where students can celebrate their love of reading, teamwork, and friendly competition. Library staff work all year on this project, and it's really fun to see students bond with each other and get excited about the books. - Alicia Phelan, Youth Services Director

Spring is more than just the season of blooming flowers—it's also the season for Battle of the Books! WRL has hosted this annual book-based trivia competition for over 35 years, drawing teams from Williamsburg, James City County, York County, Newport News, Hampton, and Poquoson. This year, 13 elementary teams and three middle school teams participated in the local competition at the Williamsburg Community Chapel, one of the largest Battles we've had! Young readers were excited to answer questions about the 12 Battle books selected by library staff. The winners of the local battle then competed in the regional competition. Congratulations to the elementary team, the Williamsburg Book Masters, and the James Blair Middle School team for winning first place in both the local and regional competitions! n



Winter Conte t r ult & Teen s



WRL held exciting conte t for adult and teen thi winter, including the inaugural Short Story Competition in February. Over 50 writer ubmitted hort torie for the chance to win ca h prize . Read the winning entrie at wrl.org/short-story. Additionally, the 4th annual Youth Art Show welcomed middle chool and high chool tudent in the community to ubmit artwork to be di played in the WRL Gallery at the Stryker Center. To celebrate their arti tic achievement, WRL held a ppecial reception on February 27 for s participant and their upporter . Special thank to the Friend of WRL for providing ca h prize for the library' creative conte t !

More Options for Digital Reader



Calling all digital readers! The WRL e-reader collection has expanded to include even more reading options for adults and kids. Library users can now check out Kindle Paperwites pre-loaded with genre-based content. These e-readers offer some of the latest and most popular romance, mystery, thriller, and nonfiction ebook titles. Families can also enjoy Amazon Kids with content for children ages 10 and under. For our Battle of the Books participants, there's a special e-reader with current and past titles for the elementary and middle school teams. If you're a fan of ebooks and audiobooks, visit wrl.org/wrl-e-readers to find the perfect device for your reading and listening adventures! h

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