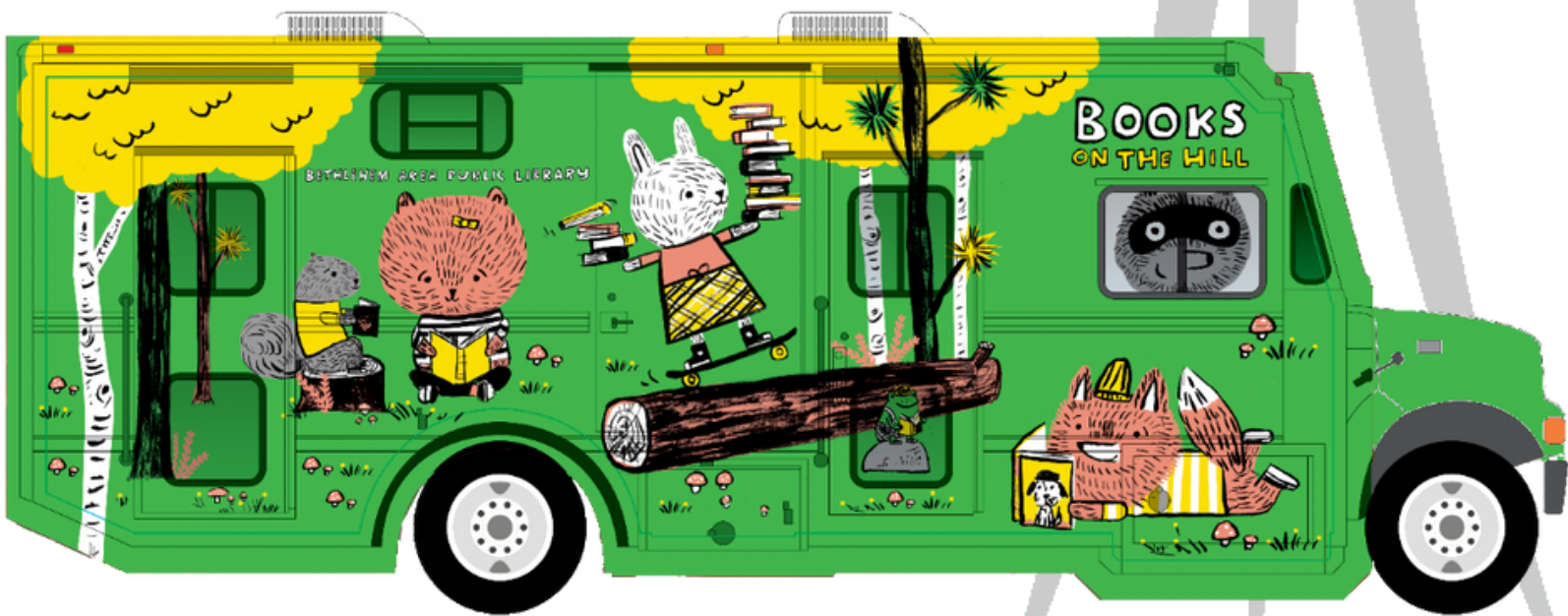


BETHLEHEM AREA PUBLIC LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

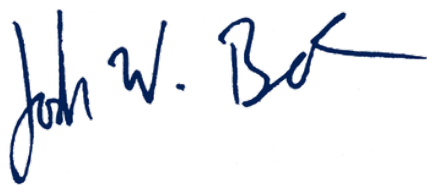


A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

We all breathed a sigh of relief when 2020 came to an end, but let's face it: 2021 had some challenges too. This was certainly the case for BAPL. The early part of the year was full of snowstorms, up and down COVID news, and an accident that destroyed our book drops (to name just a few). It seemed like it was the proverbial one step forward and two steps back. However, library staff continued to be creative and adaptable to meet the needs of the moment.

Consider: A storytime you can do outside by following QR codes on the library windows. A travel program based on virtually visiting the world. Yoga via Zoom. Storytimes to go. Outdoor events of all sorts. The list goes on. Of particular note this year was the Grand Opening of Books on the Hill, the long-awaited library satellite location in Fountain Hill.

We did slowly begin offering in-person events, including the concert known as 11FEST as well as book talks, author events, holiday festivities, and more. I'm proud of all the work we did this year—read on!



JOSH BERK

Executive Director



Library Board

Thank you to the dedicated individuals who served on the Library Board in 2021. These trustees are appointed by Bethlehem City Council and the governing bodies of each of our supporting municipalities. Trustees do not receive compensation for the service they provide on behalf of the Library and their communities.

City of Bethlehem

Anne Felker
Jane K. Gill
Joyce Hinnefeld
Rachel Leon
Olga Negrón
Emil G. Signes
Julie Zumas

Bethlehem Township

Randi Blauth
Dale Sourbeck

Fountain Hill

Annamarie Jordan

Hanover Township

Jay Finnigan

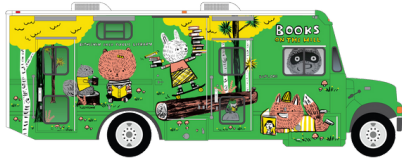
BOOKS ON THE HILL

BOOKS ON THE HILL

What do you call a bookmobile that doesn't move? It's not a riddle, it's a real question that library staff at BAPL had to ponder after purchasing a "decommissioned" bookmobile and towing it to Fountain Hill. The name they came up with is "Books on the Hill" and after a long and windy road, it was ready to open to the public this fall.

"It started when we saw the bookmobile for sale on the state library email list," said BAPL Executive Director Josh Berk.

"A library system in Bloomsburg was selling it for a bargain price because it didn't run. The engine and brakes were shot. They explained that it would be pretty expensive to get road-ready, but the interior was perfectly ready to go." A Bloomsburg librarian suggested it could be used as a mini-branch or satellite location. The vehicle is 30 feet long, with enough built-in shelving for thousands of books and other library items. BAPL is always looking for ways to expand services to the communities it serves, so we jumped at the chance. While it opened Books on the Hill held a grand opening celebration at its new location in Fountain Hill on October 2, 2021.



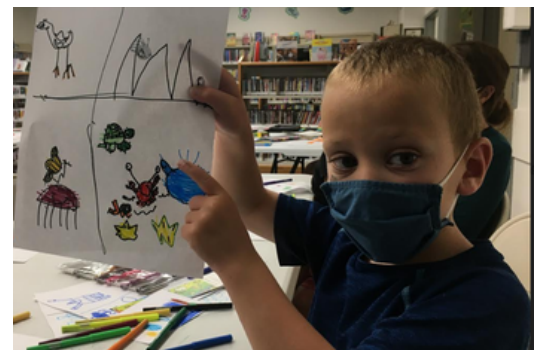
BAPL Coolidge



It was two years ago that we cut the ribbon on BAPL Coolidge, and despite the lockdowns and limitations brought by the pandemic, it's been busier than ever. The summer was particularly busy this year, as many young people enjoyed the reading program with special events such as chess lessons, a magic show, and a visit from the animals of Eyes of the Wild.

In March, the Coolidge Building added about 150 feet of shelf space, allowing this little library to greatly expand its offerings. The adult fiction and large print sections in particular expanded, offering something new for many readers. Thanks to the Friends of the Library, we were able to provide several craft programs to children and teens during the spring and summer as well. The proximity to Comer Park has proven wonderful for outdoor storytimes and other events.

As the Township population continues to grow, new families are finding their way to this library all the time, and even folks who have lived in the area for years are just now learning about Coolidge. They love the ample parking, homey atmosphere, and the friendly conversation and assistance the BAPL staff provides. "It's a little neighborhood treasure," we are told.





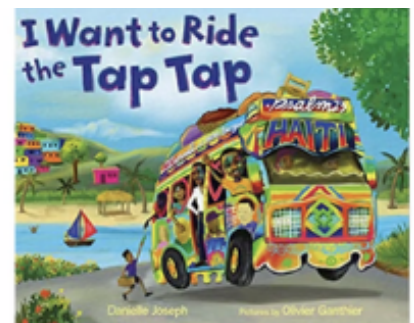
South Side Branch

The South Side Branch was happy to welcome patrons back in 2021, which brought back a sense of normalcy during this time. Everything looked a little different, with masks and social distancing and plexi-glass everywhere, but it was great to see people returning. Computers were opened up for the public again and the inability to host in-house programming resulted in innovative thinking such as take-home kits and virtual programs for children and adults.

The Summer Reading Program is always one of the busiest times of the year, but with pandemic protocols still in place, the Branch staff had to figure out how to offer storytimes and other events in a new way. There was not space in the building to hold these safely, so we thought outside the Branch. The City of Bethlehem allowed us to use the South Side Greenway for storytimes, while Broughal Middle School allowed the department to offer events such as the Eyes of the Wild animal program. Staff engaged with children at Donegan Elementary School on a weekly basis and also made regular visits to Fountain Hill Elementary School. A fun interactive magician program was held at Donegan for their students—a highlight of the summer.

Adult events were mostly held over Zoom, or prerecorded and aired on YouTube and social media. There was a wide variety of inspiring topics. The Branch held anti-racism conversations, Qigong lessons, Spanish conversation classes, and many demonstrations of D.I.Y. crafts.

A new collection sprouted up at the Branch this year in the form of a “Tool and Seed Library,” started with the help of the Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem. In addition to books, library patrons can now borrow garden tools and take garden seeds in order to start their very own gardens. Working with community partners was the key to success this year and we look forward to seeing these relationships continue to grow!



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Kirk Johnson
Race and Medicine
(31 participants)
Feb. 11, 2021

Chris Applegate
Museum of Indian Culture
Woodland life skills: exploring indigenous Relationships to nature
Nov. 16, 2021

Jamie Novak
Stop Losing your Stuff:
declutter your desk, dining table, and mind
Dec. 6th, 2021





Youth Services

The Youth Services Department looked at the challenges of 2021 and took them on with an eye for creativity and partnership. From January through June, offerings were limited to a temporary browsing space in the Cohen Room and virtual or outdoor programs. Virtual programs included drawing lessons, school-age STEM events, and teen crafting tutorials, as well as story sessions for families, babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. To complement online programs, the department provided grab-and-go kits and learning packets that could be picked up on site.

Partnerships with PBS39 and Zoellner Arts Center offered families additional opportunities to participate in virtual events, often with high-quality kits to be picked up at the library. Spring weather brought the opportunity to restart outdoor in-person events. Families enjoyed attending programs in the open space of the garden and on the library porch. Story sessions, school-age and family special events, teen gaming, and author events were just a few of the offerings.

We successfully reopened the second-floor Youth Services room for browsing on June 1, just in time for the annual Summer Reading Program. Summer was a whirlwind of staff-produced outdoor programming for all ages. Special family events included a Star Wars night, a Harry Potter birthday celebration, Meet the City of Bethlehem Mounted Police (164 in attendance!), and the Police K9 unit. We partnered with 4H, Lehigh University Art Galleries, and PBS39, and welcomed Bethlehem Area School District summer campers. Friends of the Library funded special performers and presenters and allowed us to purchase supplies for many of the programs.

In total, Youth Services presented 80 summer events, with 2,828 children, teens, and adults attending. Fall programming continued to bring children, teens, and families back to the Library as the broad scope of activities continued. Events held outside included visits from local and bestselling authors as well as arts and cultural institutions from across the Lehigh Valley. Partnerships continued, notably with Moravian University providing Homework Help and World Stories programs. Late fall also brought storytimes back indoors for the first time since March 2020. Indoor offerings required being ever mindful of masking and social distancing for patron safety.

It has been wonderful to welcome back regulars, as well as new visitors, as we continue to offer support, provide enriching experiences and materials, and create a feeling of community for all.





Bookmobile



The Bookmobile got back in the swing of things pretty nicely in 2021, although concessions continued to be made made for patrons who preferred not to come inside. At a few of the more open-area locations, we used a folding table to set out reserved items for easy pickup. This also worked well for patrons who were simply returning items, as oftentimes they could simply deposit their items in a crate without even getting out of their vehicles. Elsewhere, it was simple enough to conduct business via the windows or side door if the person would rather not come inside or bother with masking or worrying about social distancing.

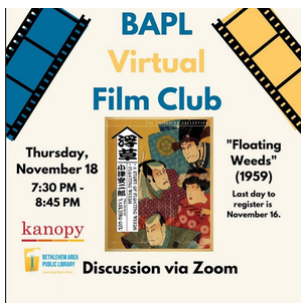


The Bookmobile had a great summer for the youth services Summer Reading Program. Sign-ups on the Bookmobile were back up to around where they were prior to the pandemic, a welcome surprise.

The Bookmobile has also expanded its schedule with two added stops in West Bethlehem. The stops are at Clearview Elementary School and Holy Family Senior Apartments. Both are great additions to the Bookmobile's already expansive lineup of scheduled stops.

For the year, a total of 7,169 items were checked out from the bookmobile to library patrons, a number that includes not just books but also DVDs, audiobooks on CD, and other library materials.





Adult Services, Main Library

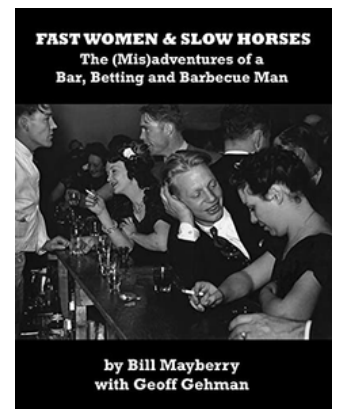
The Main Library's Adult Services department is happy to report that we held over 100 programs for adults in 2021, with over 2,000 participants. The Summer Reading Program alone had over 150 participants reading and reviewing books, along with an original writing contest.

There were two especially notable partnerships this year. One was called "Save Our Swifts," a project focused on preserving habitats for the Chimney Swift, a bird whose local habitats are threatened. The other was through the Central Moravian Church and was a series of panels and discussions on the topic of race. These presentations discussed many urgent issues including Bethlehem's troubling history with race and division, what it's like to be a person of color in Bethlehem today, and what we can do moving forward to be a more inclusive and caring community. Speakers included Sholomo Levy, Frank Crouch, Riddick Weber, Sue Koeing, and Rayah Levy.

In collaboration with Liberty High School, our department was instrumental in preserving and digitizing almost 100 years' worth of LHS yearbooks. Department Head Matthew Rothfuss said the goal was to "to give LHS alumni and their families a glimpse into Bethlehem's past" by providing free and open access to Bethlehem history through the library's website. The project is set to go public in the Fall of 2022.

We are proud of the way we overcame many of the challenges this year. One particular challenge was introducing cloudLibrary to library patrons, a brand new eBook and eAudiobook platform. District Consultant Librarian David Dunlap was instrumental in bringing the platform to the library, which offers a large increase in the number of digital books available to library patrons. Another challenge was continuing to adapt to the pandemic—the department continued to host many fun and educational events online, including a popular series of mindfulness videos by Information Technician Matt Wolf, a virtual film club, and ongoing exercise classes led by trained instructors on Zoom.

In 2021 we also saw somewhat of a return to "normalcy" after the peak of the pandemic. In addition to remote and digital offerings, the department successfully brought back in-person programming with author and other events, public computer access, fax and copying services, and Bethlehem Room access while continuing to offer robust reference services. We answered over 16,000 reference questions in 2021 on just about every topic imaginable!





Outreach

BAPL took the show on the road quite a bit in 2021. The need for social distancing required us to get creative and host more events than usual out in the open air, but there was a silver lining to that challenge. It brought about the chance to get out even more into the community we're so proud to be a part of! We've met a lot of people, shared a lot of stories, and connected with our community at many wonderful events.

Visiting children in child care centers and schools always brings about plenty of smiles. For many children, this visit might be the first introduction to what public libraries are and what they offer. Through songs, movement, and dramatic storytelling, children are pulled into the magical world of books. It's also an opportunity to get information about the library's resources and services into the hands of families.

We are also very thankful for the community partnerships that have made our outreach efforts so successful. Whether attending an event at a farmer's market or visiting a neighborhood center, we get to witness people's lives, hear their stories, and reflect upon how the library may best serve their needs. Some of our partners include the Banana Factory, Bethlehem Area School District, PBS39, the City of Bethlehem's Department of Parks & Recreation, as well as the community centers in both Bethlehem and Hanover Townships.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The uncertainty brought about by COVID-19 continued to impact organizations such as ours. It was difficult to hold fundraisers, rooms were not rented, overdue fines were not collected while people were in lockdown, and the organization was impacted in many ways. However, BAPL finished the year with a balanced budget, thanks to both careful spending and the generosity of our community. We look forward to both growth and stability in the future as we hope to return to pre-pandemic staffing levels, hours of operations, and revenues. The budget figures below include the major categories of income and expenses, but are not exhaustive and have not yet undergone a complete audit.



Total income: \$2,928,376

City of Bethlehem: \$1,416,274

State of Pennsylvania: \$565,844

Bethlehem Township: \$448,217

Hanover Township: \$205,239

Investment Interest: \$118,678

Fountain Hill: \$87,301

Overdue fines: \$29,608

Book Sales: \$25,417

Annual Appeal: \$19,521

Total Expenses: \$2,945,761

Salaries/Wages: \$1,755,581

Benefits: \$281,128

Library Materials: \$244,530

Pension Obligation: \$165,444

Utilities: \$110,623

District Expenses: \$93,334

IT: \$86,503

Insurance: \$40,022

Bibliographic System: \$36,519

Building Supplies: \$34,318

Financial Service: \$31,373

Major Donors

BAPL wouldn't be BAPL without the support of our generous donors.
The following individuals, foundations, companies and community partners made a significant financial contribution to the library in 2021.

Dr. Peter J. Behrens
Pat Corpora
Linda and Bob Freedman
Friends of the Library
Estate of Shirley Gross
Patrick and April Herrity
Thomas Hartzell & Jean Larkin Fund
Martin Guitar Charitable Foundation
Barbara Reimers
The Reidler Foundation
Gerald and Diane Roba
Estate of Alma Schlenker
Ed Vogrins
Ron and Sharon Yoshida

Thank you!





Usage and Statistics

	Active Cardholders	New Cardholders
City of Bethlehem	40,523	1,467
Bethlehem Township	9,526	489
Fountain Hill	2,371	93
Hanover Township	5,243	183

- Visitors to the Main Library: **110,823**
- Visitors to the South Side Branch: **10,880**
- Main Library check-outs: **302,969**
- South Side Branch check-outs: **13,213**
- Bookmobile check-outs: **7,169**
- Coolidge check-outs: **12,382**
- eBook downloads: **35,334**
- Internet hotspots borrowed: **653**
- Bikes borrowed: **107**
- Kanopy films streamed: **8,241**
- Articles accessed through library databases: **45,688**
- Sessions on public computers (wifi and library PCs): **14,799**

Total Items Borrowed: 379,565

Our Collection



Books	161,233
DVDs	19,840
Audiobooks	7,643
Media (records+microfilm+CDs)	10,444



Programs & Events

Total events and attendance

Total events for kids (Main + SS + Outreach) = **437**
Attendance at these programs (Main + SS + Outreach) = **8,767**

Total events for adults (Main + SS + Coolidge) = **260**
Attendance at these programs (Main + SS + Coolidge) = **5,352**

Event Highlights:

Travelers Together, the Moravian Church: Jan 24
Lessons Learned from the Black Bethlehem Project: Feb 10
Courageous Conversation, Angela Davis: March 23
Meet the City of Bethlehem Mounted Police: Jul 23
BAPL Flea Market: October 30
11FEST: Nov 11





Programs & Partnership Highlights



Lehigh Valley Book Festival

The Inaugural Lehigh Valley Book Festival demonstrated that new challenges can bring new opportunities. Because the event had to be held as a virtual series rather than an in-person fest, it provided an even greater opportunity for local readers to connect with wonderful authors; more authors were able to participate online than would have been able to in-person. Many readers attended as well, enjoying weekly Zoom conversations with great writers from March 26 through May 1.

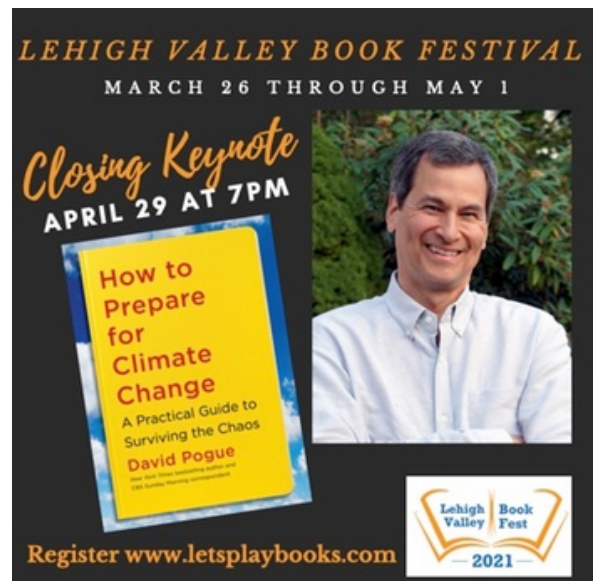
Event partners were Let's Play Books and PBS39. "Although virtual programming may not be ideal, we were still excited to share new titles and their creators with readers in the Lehigh Valley – at no cost," said Kirsten Hess of Let's Play Books.

The list of authors included well-known names from children's literature, fiction, and more. Authors included Lesa Cline-Ransome, Alexandra Penfold, Dawn Masi, Gina Loveless, Tassia Schreiner, Donna Gephart, Dan Gutman, Jordan Sonnenblick, Christian Booth, Nina Mata, Sybil Rosen, E. Lockhart, Liz Lawson, Amelia Wen Zhao, Chuck Wendig, and John Gallagher.

An impressive closing keynote presentation featured CBS Sunday Morning Correspondent and acclaimed writer David Pogue. He spoke about his newest book: *How to Prepare for Climate Change – A Practical Guide to Surviving the Chaos*.



Women in Pictures



Programs & Partnership Highlights



Chimney Swifts became the official City Bird of Bethlehem in 2021



What does it mean for a city to befriend a bird?

Save Our Swifts

Led by fourth-grade teacher and bird-lover Jennie Gilrain, BAPL hosted a series of exciting presentations about a humble little bird. The Zoom series, “S.O.S. Save Our Swifts by Saving their Urban Habitat: Telling the Story of the Chimney Swifts and their Connection to Our City,” was held in partnership with Lehigh Valley Audubon Society and the South Side Initiative, and was supported by the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium (LVEHC) Mellon Grant for Public Forums. Each session streamed live on BAPL’s YouTube channel and allowed community members to learn about the swifts and their threatened habitats.



The story of the City and the swifts began when property owner John Noble discovered the birds in the Masonic Temple chimney on the South Bethlehem property he was developing. He decided to save the birds by saving the chimney, an important part of their migratory habitat. This led to a great community conversation and the eventual adoption of the chimney swift as the official bird of Bethlehem. Questions that it raised included: How might we implement policy changes that reflect a changing relationship to the earth? How might this story encourage a city-wide attitude of respect for wildlife?

And finally, as inspired by swift champion/fourth grader Emma Huertas: What does it mean for a city to befriend a bird?

Save Our Swifts Virtual Event

**MODELING A SOLUTION OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Wednesday, April 21st, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Visit the BAPL Calendar of Events to register
www.bapl.org/events

 **BETHLEHEM AREA
PUBLIC LIBRARY**
Creating Smart Lives



Programs & Partnership Highlights

11FEST Live and loud!

Eleven performers rocked the library on November 11, in the now annual tradition known as 11Fest. The festival and the date are inspired by the library's Studio 11, whose name was inspired by our address (11 W. Church St.) and by the movie *Spinal Tap* ("Turn it up to eleven!"). To really bring home the theme, the evening is arranged with the acts going from quiet to loud, with the final act blowing the books off the shelves by turning their amps all the way up. The band with that honor this year was Controller, who surely did bring the volume, as well as fantastic musicianship. The other talented performers included: Arati Shah-Yukich, Amber Peirce, Jillian Dolan, Carys Chase-Mayoral & Ashlyn Leary, Cloud Dweller, Seth Witcher, McGarnagle, Quin Jaye, Pretty Lousy, Trickery!, Fictional Name, and RA!D.

A big thank you to everyone who performed, and everyone who came to the pay-what-you-can event. Nearly \$1,000 was raised in support of the studio, ensuring that the music will continue to flow for years to come.



