



- ▶ We create opportunities for connection and community participation.
- ▶ We deliver inclusive, compassionate, and high-quality customer service.

Work Highlights

Public Services & Programs



Engaging older adult community members

In August, we saw strong engagement across the library's older adult offerings, marked by steady attendance at ongoing programs and high turnouts for special presentations. Weekly offerings like Chair Yoga and the Wednesday Matinee, alongside monthly favorites like the Older Adult Coffee Hour and Scrabble Club, continued to attract new faces. Adult Programming Librarian Jabez Patterson highlighted the welcoming community spirit at Scrabble Club, where a new couple recently joined a group of regular attendees, ending the session with shared laughs and new connections. In addition to regular programming, Older Adult Services Librarian Claire Steiner hosted two highly successful special events. **On August 19, Oak Park Township's Aging & Disability Resource Center gave a presentation on its resources available to Oak Park residents. On August 27, 86 community members attended a program entitled "Aging at Home in Oak Park: Preparing for the Unexpected & Understanding What Happens Next," featuring Oak Park professionals who support older adults** — including first responders, social workers, hospital staff, in-home caregivers, and assisted living specialists.



Collections



Showcasing the library's community impact

The Special Collections Team recently welcomed two Middle & High School (MHS) Services team members for a tour: Programming Specialist James Turner, along with Fred Brandstrader, the facilitator for "Lights, Camera, Community" — a weekly afterschool program at the library in which high school students learn the basics of video production and create stories that highlight the library's impact on the community. **As part of the "Lights, Camera, Community" program, James and Fred are planning to collaborate with local teens to highlight the library's Special Collections**, aiming to work with students to create a mini-documentary about the history it preserves, the unique materials we care for, and the work that the team does to make these materials accessible to the community. This documentary will be part of the group's series showcasing the positive impact the library has on the community.

Community Voice

Attendees at the "Aging at Home in Oak Park" program (described above) shared positive feedback in a post-program survey, including the following comments:

- "A well-run presentation with experts. **Practical information and helpful resources.**"
- "What I liked most was the info given. **Prior to this program I was not aware of the many services offered to the elderly in OP.**"
- "**Facilitator was excellent**; topics were relevant."
- "Well organized format. **Excellent presentations of info that is so necessary for our age group.**"



- ▶ We encourage exploration of new ideas through diverse collections, programs, and other resources.
- ▶ We support community members and staff in developing the knowledge and skills to reach their goals.

Work Highlights

Public Services & Programs



2026 Summer Reading Program

On August 31, our 2026 [Summer Reading Program \(SRP\)](#) came to a close, after three months of excitement. We ran our Adult SRP and longstanding Kids SRP during the same time period (June 1-August 31), while our teen program ran June 8-August 7. Both the Kids and Adult SRPs used [Beanstack](#), an online platform where participants could register and track their reading and activities.

In our [Kids SRP](#), we once again centered time-based tracking, encouraging readers to log 20 minutes per day, working toward a 20-hour goal for the summer. As always, our motto was "all reading is good reading," and kids were encouraged to read in a way that best suits them. Each hour of reading earned kids our ever-popular prizes of a bead or vinyl sticker, plus special beads for every five hours logged. Participants were also able to choose from over 140 activities in six categories, earning badges for activity completion. Participants were given the option to track their SRP activities directly in Beanstack or via a paper log that they then turned in to library staff to be entered in Beanstack.



Over the summer, 2,200 people registered for Kids SRP, and 1,747 active participants collected over 26,000 beads and stickers, completed more than 3,000 activities, and logged over 1.7 million minutes of reading — an impressive 3.4 years' worth of time! Find more detail about our participants' amazing work in [this report](#).

This year's Middle & High School (MHS) Services SRP saw its strongest engagement in years, with 60 teens participating. The program was available for rising 6th graders through 12th graders, and any kind of reading or listening to books, graphic novels, magazines, or audiobooks could be logged. Attending summer programs and activities at the library also helped earn prizes.

Participants in this year's [Adult SRP](#) earned badges by completing a variety of activities — including reading or watching a favorite title, selecting a title from a curated list, taking a course on [LinkedIn Learning](#) or [Creativebug](#), or attending a library event. Each virtual badge earned served as an entry into our prize drawing: five winners received a \$100 [Downtown Oak Park](#) gift card valid at numerous local businesses, and another five won an Oak Park Public Library sweatshirt from the [Oak Park Public Library Store](#). To add an extra element of fun and showcase library resources, a scavenger hunt for "seeds of knowledge" cartoons featuring QR codes were hidden throughout the Main Library, branches, and Book Bikes, which 28 participants completed. Overall, 281 adults registered for the program, with 196 active participants claiming 860 badges, completing 853 activities, and logging more than 310,000 minutes of reading — the equivalent of nearly 216 days of continuous reading!



- ▶ We provide broad, effective, and equitable access to resources.
- ▶ We care for community resources, library assets, and library staff responsibly, ethically, and sustainably.

Work Highlights

Facilities



Maintaining & improving library spaces

In August, the Main Library tuckpointing project continued, reaching 70% completion by the end of the month. To date, the project has gone well, with no unexpected developments or change orders.

Also in August, the Facilities Team spent time performing routine, but critical, maintenance to many internal systems. During this routine maintenance, the team identified that our parking garage catch basins were not performing up to standard because of sediment buildup at the bottom of the basins. If these catch basins do not pump at full capacity, drainage issues can develop in the parking garage. Thanks to the team's attention to detail, we identified this before it became an issue, and we are working with our plumber to have the basins cleaned and jetted before the fall.

Finance & HR



Staff Well-Being Committee update

In August, the Staff Well-Being Committee held its first monthly meeting after a library-wide call for volunteers and welcomed five new staff members: Supervising Librarian in MHS Services Alex Gutierrez, Older Adult Services Librarian Claire Steiner, Middle School Librarian Fiona Dolce, Creative Technology Specialist Jericho Savage, and Supervising Librarian in Adult Services Margita Lidaka. **Co-chaired by Director of Finance & HR Billy Treece and Staff Learning & Well-Being Specialist Ginger Slade, the 12-member committee champions workplace culture and staff well-being initiatives throughout the library.** We extend our gratitude to both our new and continuing members for their dedicated service and to their supervisors for supporting their time to attend meetings and leadership development.

Technology



Enhancing online security

The IT Team has implemented a new email security solution to further protect our network and staff communications. This deployment represents the first phase of a broader multi-stage project aimed at enhancing the library's overall security posture. By proactively filtering and monitoring incoming messages, this tool provides a critical layer of defense against modern threats such as phishing and malware, ensuring a safer digital environment for the organization.

Collections



Refreshing popular collections

In August, Collection Management Librarian Dontaná McPherson-Joseph and Cataloging & Metadata Librarian Claire Drillinger finished an eight-month refresh of our adult and teen graphic novel collections. Using professional reviews, industry standards, and subject matter expertise, they evaluated both collections for condition, popular interest, and age relevance, updating spine labels to get books into the right sections. The update makes it much easier for patrons to find what they want and simplifies shelving for the Materials Handling Team. Additional spine label updates for popular series will continue through the end of the year.



- ▶ We develop and implement library policies and practices that promote equitable outcomes and experiences for staff and the public.
- ▶ We support our diverse community through responsive and intentional resource sharing, communication, and relationship building.

Work Highlights

Anti-Racism & Equity



Building new skills & expertise among staff

The Equity & Anti-Racism Team recently completed an intensive five-day, 40-hour Conflict Resolution & Mediation Skills Training focused on strengthening skills in communication, conflict navigation, and facilitated problem-solving. Through the training, **Director of Equity & Anti-Racism Shalonda Lane and Manager of Community Engagement Chibuike Enyia** are now trained facilitative mediators, expanding the team's capacity to support constructive dialogue, navigate challenging conversations, and foster understanding and collaboration within the library's work.

Honoring International Overdose Awareness Day

In recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, **the library partnered with the Oak Park Township and River Forest Township Opioid Task Force to host a screening of *Recovery City*. Through viewing the film and participating in a Q&A discussion with local professionals after the screening, community members had the opportunity to learn more about substance use, recovery, and the impact of the opioid crisis.** To make the program more accessible to community members who could not attend in person, the screening and discussion were also made available for virtual viewing after the event.

Social Services & Public Safety



A new community partnership to address health disparities

Beginning in October 2026, the Loyola Street Medicine program will begin providing outreach services to the library's unhoused patrons. Loyola Street Medicine is dedicated to providing medical care and social outreach to address health disparities among individuals experiencing homelessness, and its interdisciplinary team is comprised of medical residents, medical students, nurses, and public health specialists. Director of Social Services & Public Safety Rob Simmons is very excited about introducing this program, which will improve access to quality health care for vulnerable patrons at the library.

Community Voice

Special Collections at the Oak Park Public Library was cited in two recent Wednesday Journal articles:

- **Oak Park's managed integration**
- **A task force on racial diversity**