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Summer 2026 Reflections

Summer is a busy season at the Oak Park Public Library, with tremendous effort put into planning and facilitating summer programs, outreach, and other initiatives. As we transition into fall, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the past few months.

Two collaborations between staff and trustees stand out to me as impactful: 1) Our new approach to staffing the library's [A Day in Our Village](#) table, with both trustees and staff (members of the Leadership and Management Teams), was a great way to make board and staff leadership accessible to the community in a low-pressure, festive environment. 2) At the [American Library Association Annual Conference](#), trustees and staff served on a panel about leading after administrative disruption, creating a platform to share our experiences over the past year with other library staff and trustees from around the country. Both instances enabled staff and trustees to build relationships, demonstrate collaboration, and engage with diverse audiences.

In July, library staff supported the [Friends of the Oak Park Public Library](#) Book Fair by sharing space, assisting with table and materials setup, and adjusting library functions to accommodate the sale traffic. The Book Fair is a huge undertaking for the Friends group, and staff appreciate the opportunity to help as appropriate. This year's event achieved the highest gross sales to date.

Our annual [Summer Reading Program](#) (SRP) spanned all ages and was a resounding success. It's so fun to see young participants wearing their beads around the community, and our teen and adult patrons actively engaged with the program, as well. The reading component of SRP was also complemented by many programs and outreach events. SRP is one of the library's most significant annual initiatives and represents substantial planning from several departments.

We welcomed a full cohort of [teen interns](#) this summer, with placements across multiple departments. The teen internship program provides employment opportunities for community youth, enables library staff to strengthen their management and leadership skills, and offers teen participants the chance to explore careers in libraries through hands-on experience.

These are just a sample of highlights from the last few months, chosen to celebrate the ways library staff and community members came together to read, learn, and grow over the summer. Watching these projects come to life and seeing our community engage with our services in both traditional and seasonal ways is truly a joy. **It's also important to note that, in addition to special summer programming, our staff maintain general library services throughout this busy season of shifting schedules, changing library use patterns, and unique service demands.** Staff members do an exceptional job managing these changes and maintaining a high level of customer service.

I am truly grateful for the hard work of staff, the active participation of the community, and the compassionate guidance of the library board. Thank you for a successful summer season!

Respectfully submitted,
Elsworth Carman, Executive Director



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