

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

**PIMA COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**



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## Ben's Poem

### A BOOK, PERSONIFIED



Our customers always surprise us with notes of kindness and appreciation, but we also get gems like this—a poem, “The Book,” by Ben (age 10), a Miller-Golf Links Library customer. This made our day!

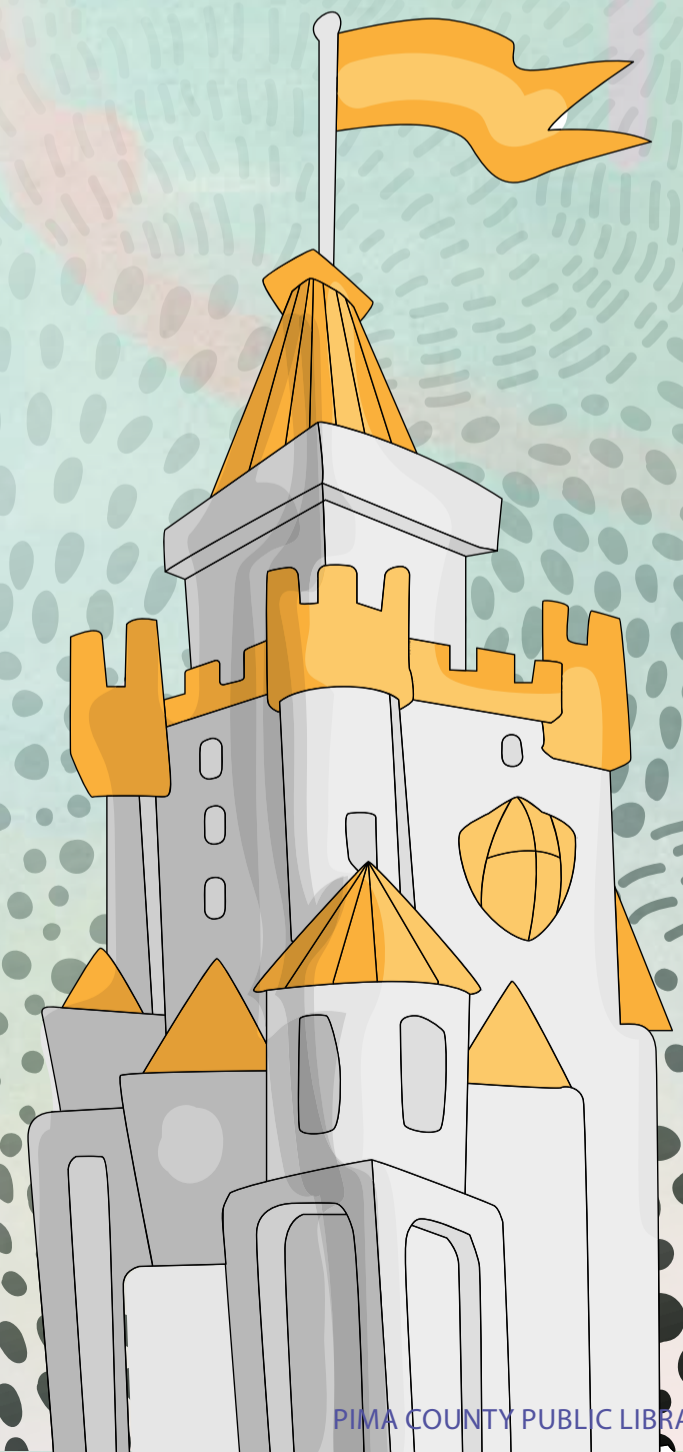
One day I opened a book. The naughty book  
kidnapped me.

It stole me to faraway castles with knights in  
shining armor.

It transported me to the future with flying  
cars and robots.

It pushed me around the world.

When it was finished, I hoped to read it again.





# Love Letters

## A LOVE LETTER TO MY LIBRARY: LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

We are grateful to our customers for their patience, understanding, and appreciation while we navigate these unique—and challenging—times. Here are just some of the notes we've recently received:



## A LOVE LETTER TO MY LIBRARY: BETTY AND WENDY

Betty was a longtime Books on Wheels customer. Sadly, she passed away earlier this year. Her daughter, Wendy Sue, gave us permission to publish a kind note Betty sent us a few years ago. Wendy offers an introduction.

Dear Wonderful Library People,

My mom, Betty, treasured your library Books on Wheels program, and books on bicycles! Her letters to me often included wonder and excitement about the great book suggestions you made and the books you'd selected just for her. Your librarians took the time to learn which books and authors she liked, and which would pique her interest. You brought more than books into her life. You brought bright moments and companionship into what could sometimes be lonely days, and we both thank you.

— Wendy Sue, Betty's daughter

### The library comes to me, bringing books—the everlasting gift

Sitting in my chair looking out the window watching the rain pour down. Unusual in Tucson—it's normally desert and dry. So dense the rain, gray, foggy, no way to see across the street.

Suddenly out of nowhere came a small dark shadow, growing bigger and bigger until it stopped on the front porch. A bicycle and a rider covered with rain gear, soaking wet and with a smile! He unpacked a canvas bag and handed out books. What a gift from out of a raining downpour. I invited him in to dry off, have a cup of hot tea or coffee or chocolate. "No, thanks—I like riding in the rain." And off he disappeared in the dense downpour.

Sitting down with the pile of books, I browsed—all from 2012, 2013, or 2014—all new indeed, and all authors I knew or would like selected just for me. That bicycle and the bicycle rider with a smile in the downpour, and Books on Wheels from Himmel Park Library, made the difference for me that rainy day.

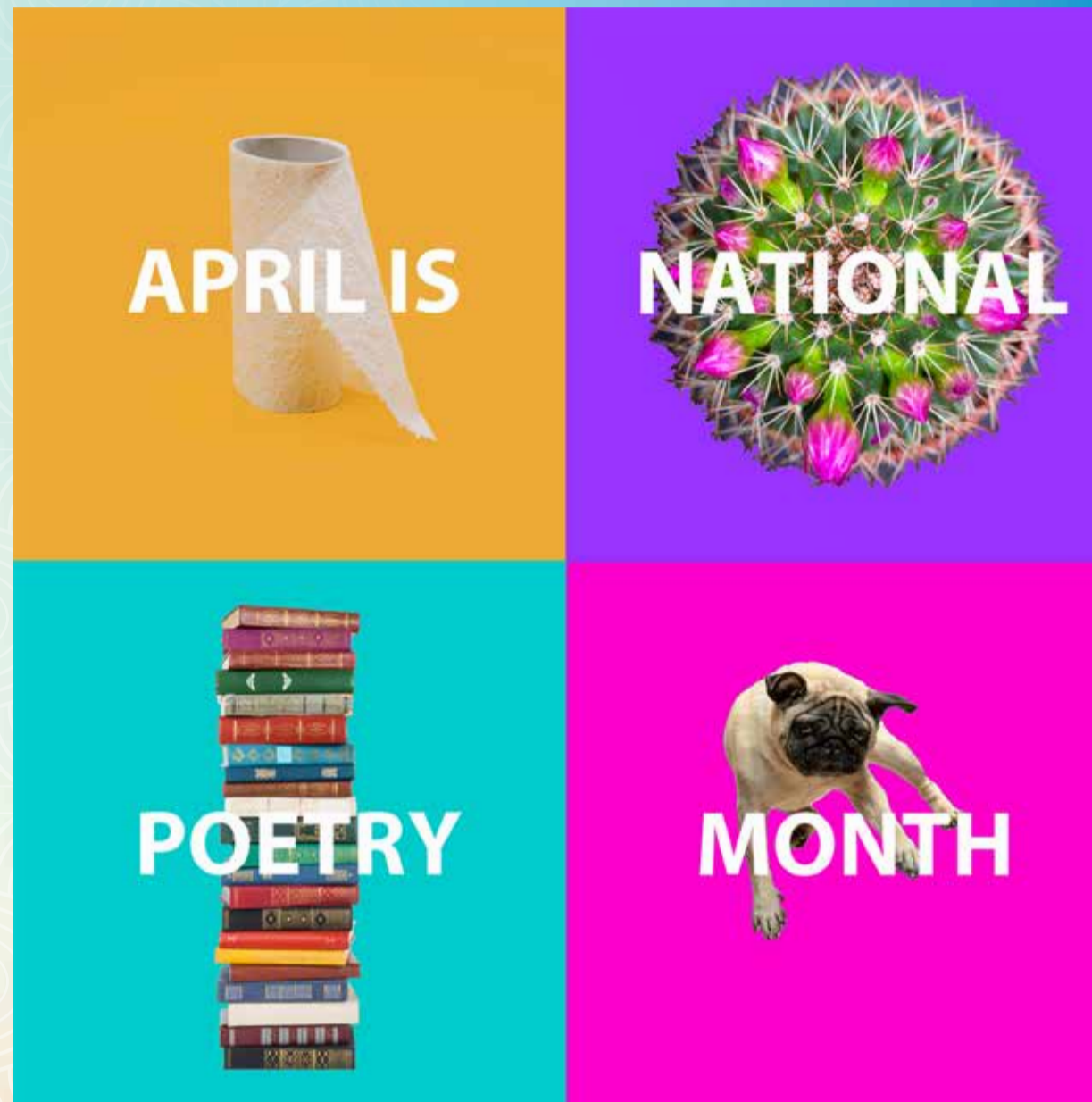
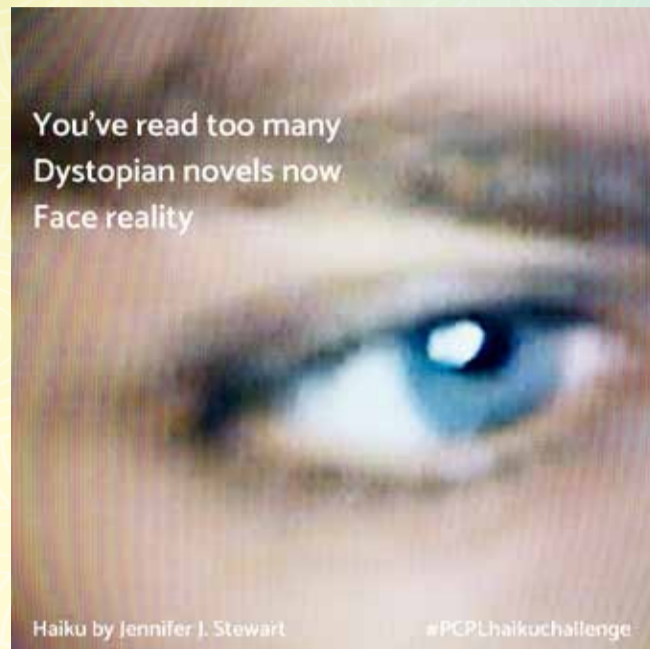
The enduring love of a book, the enduring peace of a book, the enduring adventure of a book, the enduring friend of a book in hand. Nothing could be better.

— Betty



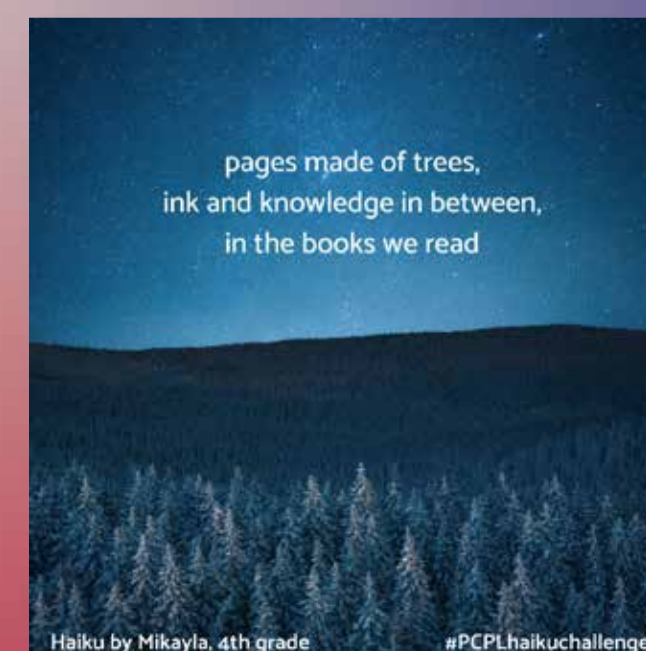
# Pandemic Haikus

WE DO SOMETHING PARTICIPATORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA EVERY APRIL FOR NATIONAL POETRY MONTH, BUT APRIL 2020 WAS SPECIAL.




**Emotional.** It was like the pace of change in our lives had hit hyperspeed and nothing was comfortable or familiar anymore. The Book Festival cancelled, then the Street Fair, then movies, then the parks and museums, and zoos. Then the libraries closed on March 18th. In some future time this would be an historic moment, but for those of us living through it, well, it was profoundly disorienting. Some days felt like one wrenching loss after another.

We sang happy birthday while we washed our hands, tried to cope with bored kids who were stuck at home, tracked infection and fatality counts, figured out how to sew masks, and waved at grandma through her nursing home's window. Did anyone know if Costco still had toilet paper? The future? Who knew? But for now, at least we had haikus...





# Pandemic Haikus, *continued*



Your face frozen on  
my screen. These days we all have  
limited bandwidth.

haiku by Janni Lee Simner #PCPLhaikuchallenge

In fact, it was the perfect opportunity to write poetry together the one place where we could still interact safely: social media. So we did. We challenged everyone within reach of our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts to write haiku. Why haiku? It's a format that is perfect for small, intense lived moments, and they are short enough for Twitter. The topic changed every week, but all of the entries used the same hashtag: #PCPLhaikuchallenge.

Kids are home from school  
All day long they talk and fight  
I am going nuts



Anna House Mote #PCPLhaikuchallenge


**Week 1:** Write Haiku about this weird new normal

**Week 2:** Write haiku about spring in the Sonoran Desert

**Week 3:** Haiku about books and libraries and reading  
(it's National Library Week)


**Week 4:** Haiku about our furry, feathered, and scaly friends

BY THE END OF APRIL, WE HAD RECEIVED  
NEARLY 300 POEMS FROM PARENTS, TEACHERS AND  
CAREGIVERS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS,  
AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN.



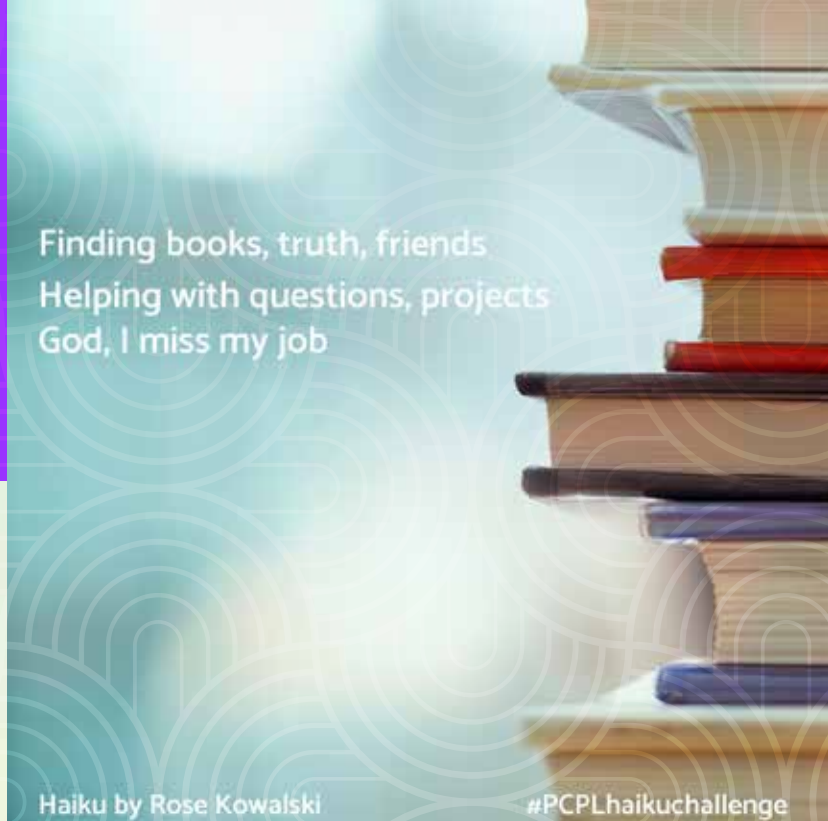
warm-bellied lizard  
drowsy bees awake and buzz  
yellow says hello

Haiku by Juanita Havill #PCPLhaikuchallenge



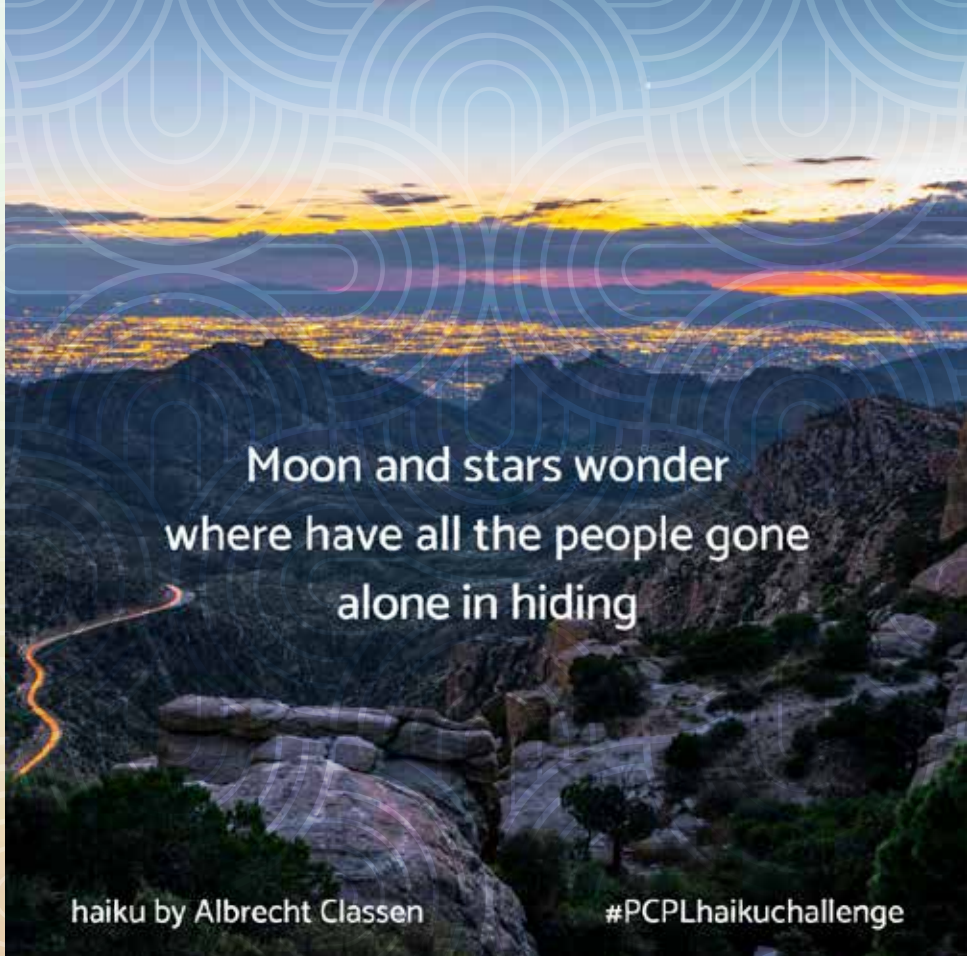
days and days at home  
testing love for each other  
coming out stronger

Reed O'Neill, grade 3 #PCPLhaikuchallenge




Finding books, truth, friends  
Helping with questions, projects  
God, I miss my job

Haiku by Rose Kowalski #PCPLhaikuchallenge



Moon and stars wonder  
where have all the people gone  
alone in hiding

haiku by Albrecht Classen #PCPLhaikuchallenge



Bougainvillea, I  
thought you were dead. Kidding!  
So glad you are back.

Haiku by Kate Stewart #PCPLhaikuchallenge



# Jacob Tobia

## THEY DAZZLED THE AUDIENCE!

On October 16, 2019, Jacob Tobia (pronouns: they/them), national bestselling author of *Sissy: A Coming-of-Gender Story*, headlined the 21st annual LGBTQ+ Services Committee Annual Author Talk. A standing-room-only audience listened as Jacob candidly spoke about gender, stereotypes, growing up not sure if you're (a) a boy, (b) a girl, (c) something in between, or (d) all of the above. With compassion, wit, and penetrating insight, they dazzled the audience with an open and honest discussion about how we can build a world free from gender-based trauma and bursting with trans-inclusive feminism.

In the epilogue of *Sissy* in a section titled "Notes to Self," Jacob writes,

*I want to start with lipstick, because where else would I start? These days, you keep a compact in your book bag so you can apply makeup on the go. You've started doing this new thing where you put a little Chapstick down and then lipstick, because the resulting red is a touch more subtle. Subtlety is something you're learning, by the way. You're cool with being more subtle about your gender now, not because your gender means less to you, but because you've emancipated yourself from the idea that you always have to prove something to other people. You've finally begun to realize that you don't owe anyone shit, and you don't have to wear bright lipstick all the time in order to demand to be seen and heard and validated. You only wear bright lipstick when you damn well please—which, to be fair, is still pretty often.*

Excerpt courtesy of Jacob Tobia and G.P. Putnam's Sons

Read the full excerpt on Lit Hub. at [lithub.com/so-youve-come-out-to-yourself-as-genderqueer-whats-next/](https://lithub.com/so-youve-come-out-to-yourself-as-genderqueer-whats-next/)





## A MONTHLY MEAL AND MUCH-NEEDED CONVERSATION

In late 2018, the Library launched the monthly On the Streets program, which was designed to engage with people who are experiencing homelessness. The program was tremendously successful and offered our most vulnerable community members the opportunity to access food, connect with possibly life-saving services, and, perhaps most importantly, have a safe space for conversations where their voices were heard.

The program continued to be successful in 2019 and into 2020, before the Library was forced to close its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Librarians Matt Landon & Meggin Kitterman, who spearheaded the program, are looking forward to once again providing much needed support to our customers who need it most as soon as they're able to safely.



Speaker Tony Mosley offers a little bit of comfort to a man who spoke up about the recent loss of a loved one and his depression during the monthly On the Streets gathering in Tucson.

### **What was the impetus for the On the Streets program?**

**Matt**

The library is for everyone. People experiencing homelessness pose a unique challenge to customer service. They are often stigmatized and because of the negative feedback they get from authorities and the public, they are often fearful of interacting with staff and asking for help.

**Meggin**

Our goal was to improve relationships with customers experiencing homelessness. We hoped to create meaningful, not punitive, interactions.

### **Were you surprised by its success?**

**Meggin**

No, library programs are often successful, but I was surprised about why it was successful. Attendees found the program meaningful because they felt heard and were able to vent with others and share information. The possibility of their thoughts being passed along to leaders in the community gave them hope and a sense of power they usually did not experience. One dear attendee—who offered so many important tips and views as we implemented the program—once said, “You know this isn’t about the food, right?”

### **What challenges did you face in getting it started?**

**Matt**

There were challenges of logistics, getting the permits and a refrigerator to serve food, but the biggest challenge was stepping into the unknown, not knowing the best way to structure the meeting, what questions to ask, who to invite as guests, and most of all how people would take to the conversation. We were pleasantly surprised.

### **Why did you decide to partner with Caridad Community Kitchen, a program of the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona? What was that partnership like?**

**Matt**

We knew there was a need for more food distribution sites, especially on weekends. The Community Food Bank and their affiliate Caridad Kitchen were the perfect partners. They provided guidance for meeting the health department requirements and prepared more than 50 meals every month.

**Meggin**

When the Community Food Bank learned that we had a monthly meeting serving meals on the weekends, they were eager to help supply food so that the program could continue. It was such a surprise to hear, “Thank you” from Community

Food Bank staff, especially after they had put in so many resources and so much time preparing the meals. Food Bank staff even attended some of the first couple of meetings to lend support.

### **What kind of feedback did you receive from participants?**

**Matt**

We received nothing but goodwill just by being present and showing respect. Each of us has challenges in our lives, it’s just that our challenges are not necessarily out in the public and open for display, like they sometimes are for people experiencing homelessness. Listening and sharing went a long way to building relationships between people.

### **What did On the Streets teach you?**

**Meggin**

I learned that it’s essential to stay open to information I might not expect. I can’t assume I have the answers because my experiences are different from the experiences of other people. If I want to help, I have to ask questions and I have to keep learning.



Gloria stops packing her belongings to give her partner, a dog named Brie, a pat on the head following the monthly On the Streets gathering.



# Richard Elías In Memoriam

TO HEAR RICHARD ELÍAS SPEAK WAS TO HEAR SOMEONE WHO TRUSTED HIS HEART TO BE TRUE TO THE MOMENT.

In the eighteen years of his time in office we at the Library were lucky to see and hear him often, especially on occasions like our high school graduation ceremonies. He was funny, corny, poignant, and real, and somehow you felt included in his family as he shared stories and thoughts about the importance of the moment you were sharing.

We lost Chairman Elías on March 27, 2020, too quickly to say thank you or good-bye. So thank you, Richard, for your leadership, your advocacy for the vulnerable and voiceless, and for speeches we never tired of hearing. We are especially honored that one of our libraries now bears his name. On October 20, 2020, the Mission Library on Ajo Road was renamed as the **Richard Elías-Mission Library**. The following is a transcript of the remarks that Mr. Elías offered at the dedication of the W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Library on January 22, 2020.

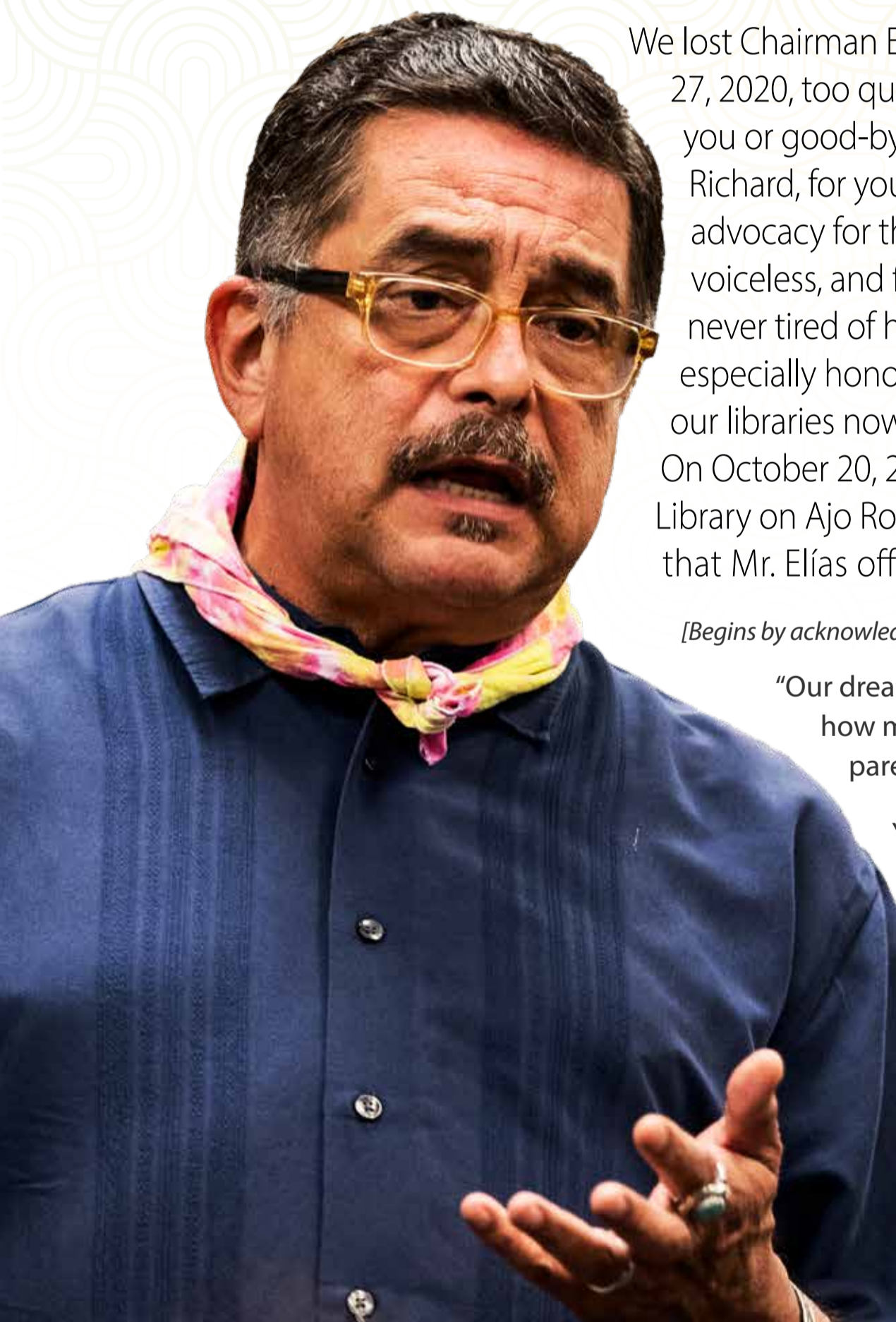
*[Begins by acknowledging that we were standing on ancestral grounds of the Tohono O'odham, and naming the 4 mountain ranges in that language.]*

"Our dreams and aspirations mount up on top of each other in my imagination, and they reach up into the sky, because that's how many dreams and aspirations our kids have. And then you match that with the dreams and aspirations that we as parents have for our kids, and then it really goes up into the heavens. That's what we do with libraries.

Yes, they're about books and they're about computers and they're about our community rooms and they're about homework help for teens and for our youth to be able to find success in school. That's how critical they [libraries] are.

And 20 years ago we talked about libraries as if they were passé. They're not passé. They have evolved. And the folks that are here from the Library Advisory Board know that. And our librarians know that and we should be very proud of them.

I'd also like to say that our librarians are our most mission-driven employees in all of Pima County. I'm not supposed to say this, but this is a small group and I don't care so I'll say it anyway: Librarians are my favorite employees. Because of what they do and how they do it. They're careful, they're loving, and they make those dreams real. So it's an honor to be here with you all. Thank you all for coming out.





# Career Online High School

## OPENS NEW DOORS, GIVES GRADUATES A SECOND CHANCE

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, more than 100 people gathered at the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona to celebrate the 3rd graduating class of the Library's Career Online High School Program. Spirits were high as 13 graduates, donned in caps & gowns, accepted their diplomas. A total of 20 students graduated in 2019, and these 13 were able to attend the ceremony.

Launched in 2016, **Career Online High School** offers adult learners, age 22+, an opportunity to earn a fully accredited high school diploma and a career certificate in one of multiple high-demand fields, including home healthcare, office management, child care, and food and hospitality. The program has been wildly successful!

"Thank you for the support. I really appreciated the encouraging emails along the way."

### "The Library gave me a second chance."

"I just enrolled in a certificate program to become a Certified Pharmacy Technician. I'm currently working at a local pharmacy to gain experience."

### Here's what some of them have had to say:



"I couldn't hold back the tears. It felt so good to hear my kids say, 'Mom, I'm so proud of you.'"

"I finished taking placement tests for admission to Pima Community College. I want to pursue my Associate of Science in Construction Science. I'm also thinking about obtaining my Associate in Business degree. **These goals all came about because of my experience in the Career Online High School program.**"

"I'm very grateful for the help that the Library has given me. **New doors have opened in my life.** I'm here in college now."

"I just wanted to get it done. I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it, and **I did.**"

"I got accepted into Pima Community College. I'm so glad this program is accredited!"

The Library wishes to thank the Pima Library Foundation, the Friends of the Pima County Public Library, the Friends of the Oro Valley Public Library, and the Friends of the Green Valley and Sahuarita Libraries for their generous support of Career Online High School.





# Writer in Residence

"I feel privileged to have been the 2020 Writer in Residence, even if it was literally from my own residence! I worked one on one with aspiring writers over Zoom. They would email me a few manuscript pages beforehand, and then we would discuss their vision for the piece, what worked well, and what could use some tweaking. Later, some emailed revisions, and I absolutely loved seeing their growth as writers." – **Jennifer J. Stewart**

## THE WRITER IN NON-RESIDENCE

"I'm **Jennifer J. Stewart**, the Library's Writer in Residence, or as it has turned out the Library's Writer in Non-Residence. Plans I'd had for this summer, including meeting you in person during my library office hours, got scrapped. A bunch of things have probably changed in your life, too, but we can still have fun together!"

Jennifer J. Stewart, the Library's 10th Writer in Residence, was the first to conduct the three-month residency remotely... and it was incredibly successful! This award-winning author wasn't about to let the COVID-19 pandemic stop her from supporting and encouraging local writers. She hosted Zoom office hours every Wednesday and Friday, and two workshops, including a Story Writing Playshop for Children and Teens. Throughout her residency, Jennifer also published some great blog posts about the art of writing. In them, she offered some advice that any writer can appreciate:

- GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO WRITE BADLY.**
- TELL THE STORY THAT TUGS AT YOUR HEART.**
- LEARN THE DRAMA OF THE PAGE TURN.**
- FLEX YOUR WRITING MUSCLES.**
- READ A LOT. WRITE A LOT.**
- EARN YOUR POETIC LICENSE.**
- BRING YOUR READERS ALONG FOR THE RIDE.**
- BE THE BOSS OF YOUR STORY. WRITE IT INTO EXISTENCE.**
- GO OFF AND DO YOUR CREATIVE THING.**



# Ready, Set, School!

## “INHALE, 1, 2, 3, 4, AND EXHALE 1, 2, 3, 4....”

What is happening is a Storytime, not a yoga class. It is our Ready, Set, School! series of 8 school-readiness classes for children ages 4 and 5, and their caregivers. The breathing exercise for self-calming is just one part of a varied 45-minute program. Each 8-week session was limited to 8 children and their parents.

**Ready, Set, School!** and its Spanish version **Listos para la Escuela** were created late 2019 in response to what we have been learning about the developmental stages of 4- to 5-year-olds, especially the skills they need to adapt to a formal classroom setting when they start school. Preschoolers need to know the alphabet and the sounds letters make, yes, but also simple counting and math concepts and learn the ability to regulate their own emotions.

During each of the eight 45-minute classes we counted forwards and backwards together, played simple math games, played “red light, green light” to learn about listening to directions, made all of our letter sounds, read stories, and practiced calming ourselves through deep breathing (“Inhale 1, 2, 3, 4...”). Storytime, but so much more.

Then came COVID-19, and we closed our doors on March 17th. No Storytimes, no classes, no music, no puppet shows, and no visits to the library. We knew we had to learn how to provide services online and were determined to keep the quality high, as high as our programs were in person. Ready, Set, School! was the perfect candidate, so we cobbled together a video recording studio using existing equipment, and began broadcasting Live on Facebook on April 17th.

**Ready, Set, School!** online classes were a hit. Two months later (the end of the fiscal year), over 300 adults had “attended” our classes (hopefully with their kids!) viewing over 15,000 minutes of the programs. Our online bilingual school readiness class was one of the first successful “pivots” of the COVID-19 library. We think some of the parents appreciated the calming exercises, too.

### By the numbers (4/17-6/30/2020):

- 20 PROGRAMS PRESENTED IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH
- MINUTES VIEWED: 15,554
- ENGAGEMENT (LIKES, COMMENTS, SHARES): 2,405
- 306 PEOPLE HAVE WATCHED A WHOLE 45-MINUTE PROGRAM



Araceli Islas teaches the alphabet



The recording studio



## Staff Stories



### FAREWELL, MR. BILL!

Our very own Bill R. retired in February 2020, after 41 years with Pima County Public Library.

On October 10, 1979 Bill began working for the Library—it was his first job. Over the years, he held numerous positions at many libraries, including Murphy-Wilmot, Eckstrom-Columbus, Valencia, Joyner-Green Valley, and Nanini.

Bill worked at Kirk-Bear Canyon Library for 21 years. One of the things that made him happiest? Seeing adults who used to attend his Storytimes bring their own kids. On one occasion, Bill went to a fast food restaurant and was told that the cook had comped his lunch. He used to attend Bill's Storytimes and is now in his early 20s. The young man told Bill that he still remembered him and how much he meant to him as a child.

To celebrate Bill and his decades-long contribution to the Library, we're sharing some of Bill's favorite Storytime memories over the years:

I remember reading the book *What Color Is Your Underwear* by Sam Lloyd. The animals in the story were wearing different colored underwear. At the end of the story, a preschooler loudly informed the room that his daddy didn't wear underwear... "My daddy goes commambo!"

Once, at Thanksgiving Storytime, I wore an inflatable turkey costume while telling stories. One child exclaimed, "You are the biggest turkey I've ever seen."

Sophie, a preschooler, used to tell me that she was going to marry me and she would become Mrs. Bill.

There was the time I read *Peanut Butter Rhino* by Vincent Andriani and acted out the story.

At the end, I sat on a paper peanut butter sandwich. I walked around with it taped to my behind.

The kids went crazy shouting, "the sandwich is on your butt, Mr. Bill!"



# Arizona Daily Star Quotes

LIBRARY STAFF HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AN ONGOING SERIES IN THE "ARIZONA DAILY STAR" SINCE 2014. THE SERIES IS A MONTHLY COLUMN IN WHICH STAFF SHARE THEIR PASSION FOR THEIR WORK AND COMMUNITY.



*Libraries are my home away from home,*

**Karina Reyna,**

**Valencia Library**

"I have seen old Storytime attendees who are now starting college come up to the desk to say thank you and hello to staff they knew, heard stories from many about family trips to the branch when they were children, and customers who come back to tell us they got that job they were applying for."



*We're all about people, not algorithms,*

**Rachel Garman,**

**Murphy-Wilmot Library**

"I guess what I'm trying to say is I've found my joy in operating a digital reference desk in a social media sphere by turning it into a place where we also share stories and jokes. Drop on by the Murphy-Wilmot Facebook page sometime. It looks like a building full of books in the pictures, but we're all human here."



*The Library is not just where I work, it is my family,*

**Marisa Guthrie,**

**Murphy-Wilmot Library**

"I love watching the children grow and make progress, and sharing stories with their families. These stories don't just come from the books we read, but from the memories we make together at the Library."



*I could list a hundred reasons why I love what I do,*

**Madian Romero, Caviglia-Arivaca Library**

"Just because we're in a small town doesn't mean we can't have fun. I could list 100 reasons why I love what I do, but I'd go over my word count! Take a day trip and visit us — I'd love to tell you more."



*I am where I belong,*

**Ray Baca, El Pueblo Library**

"I was in charge of my very own Storytime! I had helped with Storytimes before, but I had never been in charge of one. It was a little scary at first, but I learned to let loose and have fun reading, singing, and dancing with the kids. I must admit, every now and then, I still jam out to the Firetruck Song."



*Forming community bonds is at the forefront of our work,*

**Alina Rowe,**

**Mission Library**

"I love my job because, as a woman of color, I can serve everyone, and most of all I can serve those who see themselves in me. I look like them, speak languages they speak, and I am part of the community we serve. It can be intimidating to ask for help and I want everyone to know — regardless of sex, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity—that we, and I, are here for them."



*Beyond Books,*

**Daniel Behrend, Sam Lena-South Tucson Library**

"It's an understatement to say that having a job at the library is a learning experience. After a dozen years with Pima County Public Library, I can't exactly remember the first thing I ever learned, but I do remember the first thing that really stuck with me: how to smile at strangers."



*Adventures in read running,*

**Kathy Do, Valencia Library, and Joseph Mayhew, Quincie Douglas Library**

"Even though we only make the trek a few times a year, the residents and activity coordinators know us by name and by sight. They also know our schedule by heart. Even with that, we tend to swap out books so fast that the residents and staff refer to us as Library Ninjas, Book Santa Clause, or Book Ninja Santa Clause. Any of those names is fine by us."



# Story Sketches

## CREATIVITY UNLEASHED!

FLYING FAIRIES, A PUG-WRESTLING CAT, THREE WOODPECKERS AND A BOBCCAT, KIMCHI PANCAKES, HELPFUL KINGS, ANIMAL PLANETS, SUPER NINJAS, AND FLEEING FLEAS...

Young library customers sure do have some wonderful imaginations and we love showcasing them in **Story Sketches**.

Last summer, we saw something unprecedented happen. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a temporary library closure and service model change, which meant Summer Reading would not go on as normal. With Storytimes and other literacy programs on hold, school-aged children had fewer opportunities to express themselves creatively.

Library staff quickly jumped at the opportunity to continue engaging with young customers, helping them stay connected to the Library and learning.

### Enter Story Sketches!

The program invited Pima County youth, ages 5 to 18, to submit original stories to be narrated, illustrated, and turned into YouTube videos that are featured on the Library's website and YouTube channel. Staff and volunteers oversee the project from submission to publication.

Since the program was implemented in spring 2020, the stories—ranging in topic from fairy tales to the loss of a beloved pet—have been viewed more than 2,000 times. Some are silly, some are serious, but they all have one thing in common—the stories aren't edited, judged, or weighted in any way. They are welcomed, accepted, and published as is, straight from the submitter's imagination.

In the words of one Story Sketch author, "Mom, can we watch it again and again? I can't wait for all my friends to see it!"

Hop on over to the YouTube (PCPL Kids) channel to enjoy *The Three Little Woodpeckers*, *Cat vs. Pug*, *The Girl Who Had Powers*, *The Battle with Coronavirus*, and more!



**Race**  
from "The Race" by Jenisha T.  
Illustrated by Ellery P.  
Narrated by Elaina Brabant



**Helpful king**  
from "The Lost Princess and the Helpful King" by Ryu L.  
Illustrated by Megan H.  
Narrated by Elaina Brabant



**Ninjas**  
from "Super Ninjas" by Katie K.  
Illustrated by Mira D.  
Narrated by Carl M.



# W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Groundbreaking

"When will we have a library in Vail?" In 2008 we had an info table at the Pima County Fair, and it seemed like every other conversation was about how much the people of Vail and Rita Ranch needed their own library. It was hard to answer the questions. Although a library had just been completed in Marana, we knew funding methods were in transition and there was no answer we could give except to say it was a very high priority for the Library. We knew that Rita Ranch, Corona de Tucson, eastern Sahuarita, and Vail were growing exponentially, and while they had developed an excellent school system, the nearest library was all the way over on Houghton and Golf Links. They had no library of their own.

Twelve years later, on an overcast, chilly morning in January, it finally became real. We broke ground on what is now called the W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Library, just east of Empire High School on Mary Ann Cleveland Way. On January 24, 2020, Library staff, Pima County Supervisors, Library Board Members, members of the faithful community steering committee, architects, and construction workers gathered under a white tent to celebrate the dedication of Vail's new library. As Richard Elías said in his speech at the groundbreaking, libraries are built to help make dreams and aspirations of our youth and their parents become real, even when they mount up and "reach up into the sky."

*The W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Library began services a year later, on February 16, 2021.*





# By the Numbers

WE SENT 94 EMAILS TO CUSTOMERS BETWEEN JULY 1, 2019 & JUNE 30, 2020. IN TOTAL, THE AVERAGE OPEN RATE WAS 79.64%



POPULATION OF  
PIMA COUNTY

**1,044,675**

*(Pima County July 2019  
estimate. Source: Arizona Office  
of Economic Opportunity)*

LIBRARY  
CARDHOLDERS

**343,406**

NUMBER OF NEW  
LIBRARY CARDS

**35,427**

VISITORS AT THE  
BRANCHES

**3,621,948**

COMPUTER USE  
SESSIONS

**643,093**



ITEMS IN OUR  
COLLECTION

**1,108,480**

PHYSICAL  
CHECKOUTS

**3,227,862**

DIGITAL DOWNLOADS &  
STREAMING OF EBOOKS,  
AUDIOBOOKS, MUSIC, &  
MAGAZINES

**2,180,686**

WEBSITE VISITS

**4,955,070**

NUMBER OF INFOLINE  
TELEPHONE CALLS

**43,605**

PERCENT INCREASE IN  
INFOLINE CALLS AFTER  
COVID-19 CLOSURE

**175%**



PEOPLE WHO  
ATTENDED OUR  
FOOD ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

**50,622**

WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT

**6,996**

*people attended Business, Citizenship,  
GED, Nonprofit, Job Help, Teen Interns, &  
Career Online High School Programs*

ADULT LITERACY

**16,679**

*people attended English Language  
Classes, Drop-in Help, One-on-  
One Help, & Computer Classes  
Programs*

EARLY CHILDHOOD  
LITERACY

**58,119**

*people attended Storytimes,  
Reading Skills & School Ready  
Programs*



# Awards

## TWELVE MONTHS, FOURTEEN AWARDS!



Pima County Board of Supervisors District 2: Thank an Essential Worker Campaign  
**Brandon Milligan, Delivery Manager**



AzLA Service Awards, Outstanding Library Service Award  
**Ken Zambos, Program Manager for Workforce and Economic Development**



Pima County Board of Supervisors District 2: Community Leadership Award  
**Mary Sanchez, Eckstrom-Columbus Library**  
**Tenecia Phillips, Sahuarita Library**  
**Dana Moore, Quincie Douglas Library**

American Libraries 2019 Library Design Showcase Landscape Views Award:  
**Flowing Wells Library**



*Inside Tucson Business* Women of Influence Finalist  
**Kristi Bradford, Nanini Library**

Green Valley Friends of the Library Scholarship  
**Sila Gonzales, Library Associate**  
**Sheryl Orman, Library Associate**  
**Victoria Villanueva, Library Associate**



Tucson High Magnet School Badger Foundation Hall of Fame  
**Amy Rusk, Library Services Manager**



*Tucson Weekly* Best of Tucson: **Best Storytime**

Friends of the Oro Valley Public Library Support Staff Scholarship Award  
**Victoria Mironenko, Library Page**



AzLA Service Awards, Sharon G. Womack Outstanding Library Technician Award  
**Carter Gates, Library Technical Assistant**



## CONGRATS, ANNIE WICKS!

Annie Wicks, Children's Librarian at Dusenberry-River Library, received a Ben's Bell in May 2020.

Ben's Bells is an organization that recognizes individuals who inspire kindness daily. Annie was nominated by customer Sarah W., who had this to say about the nomination:

*Annie runs Storytimes for babies and toddlers, and organizes the library's activities for kids. Annie makes the library a welcoming, warm place for children of all ages and backgrounds. She remembers names and what kids like to read, jokes with them, and has a kind word for every single child who comes in. I am frequently in the library with my 7-year-old son, Alex, and I am amazed at how many kids Annie knows by name and how she can connect with them and make them feel at ease with her genuine, relaxed warmth. Any time a new kid arrives for a library event, she is right there making sure they are welcomed and made a part of the activity.*

*I am so grateful to have people like Annie in our Tucson community. The library is an excellent resource for families with kids and Annie gives it life with her humanity and compassion. I strongly recommend Annie for a Ben's Bell and I know others in the Tucson community who patronize the library would agree.*

We checked in with Annie regarding the nomination and her work at Pima County Public Library.

### **How and when did you meet Sarah and her son Alex?**

I met them within the last year or two. He is a regular at our Read to a Dog program, which we offer every Friday. I like to call him one of our Read to Dog veterans. He is wonderful with the dogs, does a

great job reading, and is just a great spirit to be around. All of our dog teams know Alex and Sarah and love when they visit the program.

### **How does working at the Library allow you to form deep connections with community members like Sarah and Alex?**

The programs that I offer (Storytimes and Read to a Dog, in particular) give me the opportunity to offer fun, engaging programs for kids and their families. These programs also allow me to introduce myself to each family directly and strike up conversations. I want to be sure that every child and their family who comes into the Library knows who I am and knows that I am there to be a resource for them. Working with kids has changed my heart profoundly, and I am so grateful.

### **Do you have a favorite memory interacting with them?**

Pretty much any time I get to talk to Alex is memorable interaction. I love talking to him about what books he is reading and how school is going. He is such a gracious kid with a wonderful spirit and laughs at even my most ridiculous jokes (which is why I like to keep him around!).

### **What does receiving a Ben's Bell mean to you?**

It means the world. Ben's Bells is one of my very favorite organizations. I love their mission, and I love what they have done for the community. It is truly an honor to receive a bell. The fact that I was nominated by my buddy Alex and his mom Sarah is icing on the cake.



## A TESTAMENT TO THE CARING COMMUNITY WE CALL HOME

When Pima County Public Library closed our buildings' doors to the public on March 18, 2020, dozens of staff jumped at the opportunity to provide much-needed support to other Pima County departments. Read below to learn more about the COVID-19 recovery work of PCPL staff in vital positions throughout the county.

Vicki Lázaro, a young adult librarian at Joel D. Valdez Main Library in downtown Tucson, worked at the Pima County Emergency Operations Center, where experts in their fields coordinated messaging from the Health Department, logistics about food distribution, fielded questions from local and national media and navigated relationships with law enforcement, long-term care facilities and the Tohono O'odham Nation.

While there, Vicki provided administrative support to all staff operating in the center. "The work was dynamic, educational, scary and exciting all at once," Vicki said. "As a librarian, my mantra is 'access to information.' In this temporary position, I provided access to information by capturing crucial details of the seemingly non-stop meetings regarding everything from ambulatory care to volunteer coordination."

In this fast-paced situation, evolving minute-by-minute, Vicki helped Emergency Operations team members learn how to use and understand critical communications tools, including videoconferencing, natural language transcription, group chat software and Microsoft Office tools. According to Vicki, "This pandemic is an incredibly difficult point in our history, and I am happy to be one of the helpers."

Wade Zelenak also worked at the Emergency Operations Center. Taking a break from driving the Bookmobile, which he's done for 25 years, Wade staffed the lobby desk, took temperatures and issued access badges. "I disinfected the badges every day, but also made sure to disinfect door handles and other frequently touched surfaces," Wade said. "People took note of this and thanked me for doing it." Wade would also run errands for EOC staff, including taking two boxes of work gloves to the Nogales Food Bank for workers handling crates of produce.

Wade valued his time at the EOC. "I felt like I was making a difference because I freed up regular staff to complete more complex tasks. I even got to take

advantage of all my years in library service when a staff member asked me to research disinfecting and re-use of N95 masks."

More recently, Wade was sent to the State Department of Health Services in Phoenix to pick up 480 doses of Remdesivir for distribution to hospitals in southern Arizona.

At the Pima County Community Action Agency, Grants & Nonprofits Librarian Wayne Wheeler helped staff the CAA call-in hotline assisting people who needed help paying their rent and utility bills because of economic hardships of the coronavirus.

According to Wayne, "It was sometimes sad and frustrating to hear about the predicaments of our community members, but the work itself was very rewarding, and I was happy to help."

Meanwhile, at the County's Community Services, Employment and Training Department, Librarian Matt Landon worked on a project called Tucson CARES, placing high-risk and COVID-19 symptomatic people experiencing homelessness into hotel rooms for their protection, and to protect the community. Matt said, "I took calls from outreach workers, the Tucson Police Department and hospitals, filled out triage and intake forms and passed information on to fellow workers doing data entry and arranging transportation." The work meant a lot to Matt. "I feel like I'm doing an important job for the community. It's been rewarding to help people get into a temporary housing situation with the hope that case workers can offer additional help in the future."

Brandon Milligan is the library's delivery manager, so it's apt that he took on the role of running deliveries all over the county, including face masks made by folks at the local Xerocraft Hackerspace to the Pima County Health Department.

Starting his day at the Pima County Jail, Brandon picked up hundreds of surplus meals, loaded them into a library van and hauled the food to the Casa Maria Soup Kitchen. He did this seven days a week. "The gratitude I got to see was overwhelming. Watching the community come together for each other, especially in a crisis situation, is very rewarding."





# COVID-19, continued



Rose Kowalski is usually the circulation manager at the Miller-Golf Links Library. During the pandemic, she began working at the County's Dislocated Worker Hotline where she provided job placement, emergency and veteran assistance, among other tasks.

"During the first few weeks," recalled Rose, "we took 80 to 100 calls per day from people facing newfound hardship. I got to talk to people in a time when isolation was crippling. I was able to help my community in much the same way we help patrons [at the Library]."

Alex R., a client who received help from Rose, wrote a letter praising her work. In it, he said, "I could not have asked for a better associate to speak with. Rose gave me all the information I needed with a direct answer, but at the same time in a courteous and helpful attitude."

Rose was not the only library staff member working that hotline. Fellow library staff Jon Meade, Meggin Kitterman, Jacqueline Felix, and Victoria Villanueva joined her. "We are information geeks," Rose said. "Of course we're going to help people find what they need."

Other library staff, including Sherryl Volpone, Amanda Guest, and Amy Peterson, did not hesitate to put themselves on the front line, taking temperatures at various Pima County locations. Amanda also spent time working with Wayne Wheeler at the Pima County Community Action Agency.

Pima County employees at the Library and other departments stepped up in ways large and small to support the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. These past months have been a testament to the caring community that we call home.

As the stay-at-home order has been lifted and we continue to navigate this new and challenging environment, one thing is certain: When challenges arise and they are able to help, library staff will answer the call.

MARCH 18	Libraries closed to the public. Library Wi-Fi continued to be available from 6:00 am–10:00 pm at all 26 library locations.
MARCH 28	Libraries closed to staff.
MARCH 30	Essential employees only reported to Main Library or telecommuted, approximately 31 employees. Staff members who were off work had access to 2 weeks County Pandemic Leave, and 2 weeks Federal Emergency Sick Leave.
MID-APRIL	More than 50 staff members helped provide essential services in other departments, including the Office of Emergency Management, Pima County One Stop, Housing Center Services, Food Distribution. They also assisted in temperature taking throughout the County.
APRIL 13	Staff were called staff back to work Infoline and Ask-a-Librarian service. Ordered PPE and cleaning supplies, and developed of signage and barriers, Plexiglas and stations to prepare for opening.
APRIL 24	Branch Managers recalled to work 4 hours per week, then 8 hours per week to help with staff time reporting and decision-making. The original plan was to open 10 library locations with curbside service and 4 libraries with computer services. However, when it was determined that the stay-at-home order was likely to be lifted, the plan shifted.
MAY 11	Many staff called back to work to have as many libraries as possible open in some capacity for May 18th.
MAY 18	Libraries reopened with holds pick up at 24 locations and computers available in 17 locations. Dusenberry-River Library closed for renovations, El Rio closed for renovation and waiting for center to reopen. Libraries opened with the requirement of all staff and public wearing masks and having temperatures taken.
JUNE 8-23	Library locations opened with holds pick up and limited computer sessions, 25 library locations eventually provided holds pick up and limited computer sessions and El Rio remained closed due to the closure of the city center.
OCT 19	Computer use provided at all locations, except El Rio Library, which was still closed.
NOV 9	Began holding materials for 24 hours instead of 72 at check-in based on scientific research from the CDC regarding how long the virus remains on surfaces.
NOV 16	Allowed patrons to browse collections and utilize self-checkout.
DEC 21 - JAN 10	Staff began working half time, 14 locations provided holds pickup and food distribution.
JAN 11	Open library locations provided holds pickup, food distribution, printing, and faxing support. There was no building or computer access provided until COVID-19 numbers were on a downward trend.
JAN 14	Library staff began helping with County's COVID-19 vaccination registration support line.





# PIMA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

101 N. Stone Ave.  
Tucson, AZ 85701



Call (520) 791-4010

Visit [library.pima.gov](http://library.pima.gov)

*For readers, learners,  
doers, & dreamers*

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