

Welcome to Library Legislative Day! Your job today is to talk to legislators – those for your own districts but also any others who come. We are not pushing any agenda items this year; we just want to make sure our policy makers remember how important libraries are in the lives of their constituents. Here are some stories from our state that might help make that clear.

How do libraries transform their communities?

Siouxland Libraries

Adults Discover:

Siouxland Libraries has created Adults Discover to serve those with disabilities. Each month, the program is planned around a specific theme and includes age-appropriate stories, movements, and a take-home art project. With nearly 40 attendees, the program reached capacity in its first few months at the Downtown Library, which led to a second program at the Prairie West Branch. Customer feedback has been positive—program attendees are excited to spend time at the library and with each other. Staff from group homes or day programs who accompany them say this is one of the few outside activities in the area for adults with disabilities.

Coffee & Conversation:

At the Downtown Library in Sioux Falls, staff host Coffee and Conversation the second Monday of the month. Free coffee and cookies are available to anyone in the library, and staff have the opportunity to chat and build relationships with attendees. The main goal is to create more positive connections with customers experiencing homelessness or other challenges. Library staff have received positive feedback both from people who attend, and from others who understand its importance and are grateful for the outreach. Relationships formed through the program have helped strengthen staff/customer relationships at throughout the month.

Lakota Language Series:

Tim Easter, a local teacher for Lakota language and culture, has led a multi-part monthly series in the Lakota Language. An elderly Native American woman who speaks Lakota fluently attended the class but had never had the opportunity to learn to read or write the language. The class provided her with an opportunity to learn new skills, but it was also a great experience for Tim, who is not yet quite fluent, to talk and practice with another native speaker.

Lake Andes Library

Summer reading: Children and youth at the Lake Andes library have a summer reading program like many other public library patrons. However, Lake Andes kids can earn field trips to remote (to them) locations for great fun and educational activities such as seeing the solar eclipse in Nebraska, going to the Discovery Museum in Rapid City, visiting Dignity in Chamberlain, or going swimming.

Summer meals: The schools in Lake Andes used to provide breakfast and lunch to students attending their summer programs. For many students in the area, this was how they ate in the summer. The schools are undergoing construction projects and have not been able to provide the meals for the last couple of years, so the Lake Andes library saw an opportunity to benefit their young patrons. They serve dinner in the Community Center a few blocks from the library. This dinner is open to any youth, not just those in

the schools' summer program. Last summer, flooding prevented some students from walking to town for dinner (they had to walk an extra 4 miles to walk around the flooded areas) so this summer the library will be looking for a satellite location or delivering meals directly to the students.

Brookings Public Library

There was a short line to check out books at the Brookings Public Library one day and a Brookings school librarian overheard a teen talking to his parent. The teen was about to check books out and was getting his library card out. He said that his library card was the most important thing in his wallet.

South Dakota State University, Briggs Library

Wokini Initiative: Briggs Library received a grant from the SDSU Wokini Initiative to digitize the papers of Senator Ben Reifel. The result of this grant is that the papers from Senator Reifel are available to anyone online. A more immediate benefit is the three American Indian students who were hired to digitize the collection. One has graduated and is working on becoming a librarian, the other two were freshmen and have indicated that finding a safe place and interesting job helped them feel at home at the university and continue on in their studies.

Archives and Poetry: A creative writing class used a recent collection from the SDSU Archives as inspiration and research in their poetry writing. Dr. Christine Stewart (South Dakota Poet Laureate) led a class in using cookbooks created and published by South Dakota churches, clubs, and cooks as inspiration for their poetry.