Explore Memphis is a library-based summer program that focuses on addressing the “summer slide,” improving kindergarten readiness, and increasing student literacy rates. Its main goal is to provide education attainment opportunities to low-income, at-risk youth through educational and creativity-driven programs. One of Explore Memphis’ most popular programs is its Tween Forensics Camp. Students also get to participate in engaging activities such as book clubs, cultural celebrations, writing workshops, and even escape rooms. As they transitioned online this past summer, Explore Memphis saw 8,200 students attend their programs and over 555,343 minutes were logged for their reading adventures.

Who will win the nation’s top honor? Check out the other finalists at www.globenewswire.com.

Chattanooga Girls Rock!

The Downtown Branch of the Chattanooga Public Library will begin lending musical instruments on August 2, 2021 from the Noise Closet, a collection established in partnership with Chattanooga Girls Rock! CGR! is an organization that “exists to empower girls, trans, and nonbinary youth in our community to build confidence and celebrate their individuality through collaborative music education, social justice and performance” (CGR! website). Chattanooga Public Library and CGR! have similarly-aligned visions to contribute to a Chattanooga that is accessible, connected, collaborative, and full of life-long learners who are empowered to innovate and create, whether through music, art, or educational opportunities.

The Noise Closet offers a specifically rock instrument collection available for checkout for library cardholders ages 10-17—and those enrolled in high school—that includes electric guitars, bass guitars, amps, keyboards, and complete drum sets! CPL lends the instruments one at a time for a two-week period, and an amp can also go home with your guitar or bass!

CPL is delighted to make these instruments accessible to the kids in our community, and being able to help CGR’s instruments reach more kids all year long is a perfect way to consider library partnerships with community organizations. CPL can offer what it has—lots of space and experience cataloging and lending items—to create access to what it needs—unique, interesting, expensive, or difficult-to-obtain items—so that the community, the partners, and the Library all benefit from establishing the collection.

Stop by and visit us and see the Noise Closet in person at the Downtown Branch of the Chattanooga Library at 1001 Broad Street in Chattanooga. We can’t wait to make some noise with you on the 2nd Floor!
I feel such gratitude to be able to serve among all of you as TLA’s President. It is not my wish to dwell on the last year’s many effects on library services — and I will do my best to avoid using the wearisome phrase “unprecedented circumstances” — but I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge and celebrate some of the wonderful and creative things Tennessee libraries accomplished this past year. Curbside checkouts, virtual storytimes, social distanced programming, video tutorials, enhanced digital collections, vaccine registrations, remote learning, drive-in movie screenings, hotspot lending, and of course, our very own virtual TLA Conference and Library Legislative Day! Throughout the pandemic, Tennessee’s library workers in every kind of library have repeatedly shown dedication to their service populations and to librarianship’s core value of information access. I’m so proud to be able to call myself your colleague and a member of the TLA community.

And with that in mind, I’d like to announce that the theme for this year is Cultivate CommUNITY! As previously mentioned, library staff have a heart for service, and while “community” can have many connotations, when the word gets mentioned among our ranks, it justifiably conjures thoughts of our patrons, students, and municipalities. However, I’d like to encourage us to expand our idea of community to include each other. The time we all spent social distancing may have inadvertently caused us to pull away from our professional network of friends. The furious working speed as we figured out and implemented service continuation may have made us all too tired to think about anything outside of our own library’s responsibility. If you have found yourself removed from your library colleagues across the state, I encourage you to take some time to reach out and check in with them. As schools start back and businesses reopen, our local communities may look as if they are back to normal, but our library community may still be fatigued and even traumatized from our Herculean efforts last year. Please consider the following as a personal encouragement from me.

The first is: You are not alone in the important work you do. The whole state is filled with library workers who are standing with you and who can serve as your sounding board for any issues or ideas you may have. We value your pivotal place in your local community and in our library community.

The second is an ask. Please take the time over the next few weeks to reach out to a colleague you haven’t seen or had a chance to speak with much since the pandemic began. Reignite your professional friendships by checking in with them to see how they are doing. Remember, we’ve all come through so much, and who better to understand it than a colleague doing the same thing in their library?

And finally, while the future is uncertain, I do want to tell you that it is our intention to have an in-person conference in 2022. I can’t tell you how much I’m looking forward to being together with all of you again, and I hope you will all make plans to attend should our current intentions become reality. However, we shouldn’t make our annual conference the only time we connect with our colleagues across the state. TLA is a community — your community — and I invite you to cultivate it with me in the coming year.

—Best regards,
Sharon Edwards
TLA President

From the Executive Director

Next year’s TLA Conference—with the theme of “Cultivate Community”—will be held April 12-14, 2022, at the Knoxville Convention Center. This is exciting due to plans to hold the conference in person with some virtual elements. Plans are in the early stages at the moment, but Conference Chair Jamie Osborn is hard at work with many ideas and logistics. More details will be coming soon, but if you have questions now, please write to Jamie at josborn@knoxlh.com.

—Cathy Farley
TLA Executive Director
Dear Friends and Good People,

This is how our loyal friend Don Reynolds always addressed this list of his library peers. Don at age 79, of Talbott, passed away Monday, August 16, 2021 at Life Care of Jefferson City. No services are scheduled. Arrangements are by Westside Chapel Funeral Home in Morristown.

Don was Founding Director/Former President of The Association for Rural & Small Libraries from 2007-2008 and President/active member of Friends of Tennessee Libraries (FOTL) after his retirement as Regional Director for the Nolichucky region. He had an unwavering passion for libraries. We worked with him at the state library to support FOTL. He was constantly asking me for library statistics and state rankings and I tried to keep up with him as best I could! I will miss my long conversations with him and will continue to be inspired by his advocacy for our libraries.

—Christy Chandler

Farewell Don Reynolds

NALA Conference Coming Soon

Machelle Keen and Karen Swoops are busy planning the upcoming NALA Support Staff As Leaders 2021 Fall Conference to be held October 20 and 22 virtually. The theme is “Succeeding through Perseverance and Endurance”. The website has not yet been set up, so look for that in a future email. If you have questions, please write to Machelle and Karen at machelle.keen@vanderbilt.edu.

Need a Job? We got ‘em!

If you are looking for a new career, or know someone who is, then keep a watchful eye on your listserv email. Jobs are advertised frequently all over our wonderful state. This is a great way for someone to get their foot in the door of the wonderful world that is the library. If you are happy in your current job, then please share these announcements with your friends and family!
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