



National Library Week (April 4 -10) is a time to celebrate our nation's libraries and library workers' contributions – and 2021 is certainly a year to celebrate!

National Library Week began in 1958, sponsored by the American Library Association, and is observed in libraries across the country each year. We applaud the hardworking people who keep the library running smoothly every day, and this is a great time to recognize our staff in a special way.

In 2020, our staff were challenged to practically reinvent their jobs overnight. Thankfully, our library is staffed with resilient, creative, and imaginative people, so they did just that without missing a beat!

Although our buildings have been open since last summer, we understood that not everyone was comfortable venturing out during a pandemic. In a year marked with fear and isolation, your library moved beyond our walls to bring the library to you in your homes and communities.



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Mary Ellen Icaza – CEO & Executive Director

Your librarians host virtual storytimes, classes – and even author visits – that you can attend right from home! Imagine – RL Stine right in your living room (don't forget to [register to meet him](#))! Our tech trainers are doing training sessions over Zoom meetings.

Even our [SPARK](#) parent partners, who usually do in-home visits, were able to use Zoom to do their monthly visits - and they even dropped off books and activities to the families so that the students could still enjoy the activities and books they love.

[Thanks to our outreach services](#), we are in the schools, on the roads, and even in your mailbox!

Did you know that in Stark County, 11.1% of residents don't have a computer in the home and 17% don't have internet access? That number is even more dire as you move into the inner city. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we provided WiFi hotspots with free unlimited data to families and students in need. In 2020, more than 1,215,396 people accessed the internet using the library's free WiFi – which extends beyond the walls of our buildings. Many children in our community depend on the free meals provided by their schools throughout the school year. However, during the summer, those students may struggle to obtain healthy meal options. We partner with the school districts, the Stark County Hunger Task Force, and the Children's Hunger Alliance to distribute healthy meals to families in need. In addition, our bookmobiles visit during meal distribution to provide free WiFi to communities. As students and families continue to struggle with learning-at-home, we partner with Canton City Schools to provide custom content to help augment their curriculum.

With our Books by Mail service, homebound individuals can even request to receive their favorite books delivered straight to their mailboxes. More than 7,000 children five and under are currently treated to a free book every month with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – and now information on the program is included in the newborn packets at area hospitals!

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While 2020 was a year that most of us would like to forget, let's remember that as our dear friend, Andrea Legg, Executive Director of North Canton Public Library reminds us, [the library offers hope](#). With some imagination and teamwork, we found new ways to offer hope to our community, even in the midst of a pandemic.

We hope that you'll stop by your library this week and give your librarian some love!

Mary Ellen Icaza
CEO & Executive Director

Learn more about how Stark Library impacted our community during 2020 in our [Impact Report](#).

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