

Fall/Winter 2020

Cecil County Life

Magazine

Kilby Cream: *Simply fresh, simply Cecil County*

Saving a space for the arts in downtown Elkton
Cecil County Chamber helps businesses navigate
through the unknown

A virtual library system reaches the community

Complimentary Copy

A virtual library system for a virtual community

Despite having to close its doors due to the pandemic, the Cecil County Public Library system has continued to reach the residents of Cecil County through innovation, a dedicated staff and a commitment to its core mission



By Richard L. Gaw
Staff Writer

As Cecil County rolled into March this year and everyone's world from Rising Sun to Perryville to Earleville to Georgetown dramatically changed nearly overnight, the value statement for the Cecil County Public Library system did not budge.

In fact, over the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic, the values listed in the statement -- Champion Reading, Build Knowledge and Inspire Curiosity -- have gotten broader and stronger.

Despite the fact that the system's seven branches in Cecilton, Chesapeake City, Elkton, North East, Perryville, Port Deposit and Rising Sun have yet to reopen, the more than 64,000 county residents who hold a library card can still read an ebook or a magazine, download a

All photos and images courtesy of Cecil County Public Library
To better provide students and families with internet access during the pandemic and during library closures, the Cecil County Public Library extended strong WiFi signals into the parking lots of all branch locations.

movie, track down material and resources for school, study for an upcoming exam, take an online course, learn a new language, attend a lecture and continue to rely on their local library for access to the information they need.

All day and every day.

So the question is this: How has a multi-layered, county-wide agency that serves the 100,000 residents of Cecil County managed to not only continue to reach the public, but thrive in the process, without so much as opening one door of its seven branches?

The answer, said Cecil County Public Library Director Morgan Miller, has been through innovative strategies, the commitment of a dedicated staff and by clinging to the principles of its mission statement.

It all began on March 12, when the library system closed its seven branches.

"At the time, none of us had any eye toward what the future held, but as a result of having to reframe and re-shift our strategy, we have learned to navigate through dramatic changes, and yet keep these strategies intact with the library's core values, one of which is responsiveness to our community," Miller said. "In the first few months of the pandemic, while our buildings were closed, our shift was how we were going to continue to provide information and develop new platforms of communication."

Through their efforts, the CCPL has preserved – and even strengthened – the pipeline of resources and information to Cecil County:

- Through applications like OverDrive, Libby, Android, hoopla and Kindle Fire, CCPL users can borrow as many as ten books, movies and other library materials at a time – all online.
- Lynda.com provides users with unlimited access to thousands of video courses led by industry leaders.
- Gale Courses open the door to users who wish to attend six-week online courses taught by expert instructors.

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The library's Bookmobile traveled around the county this summer to offer all rising sixth-graders the opportunity to select and keep three books.



Virtual library

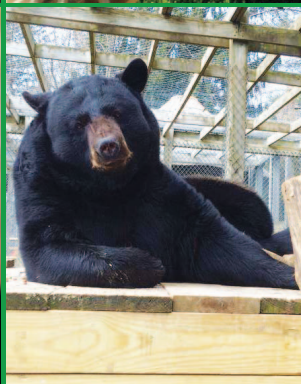
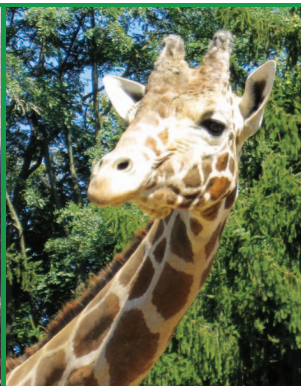
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In partnership with Cecil County Parks and Recreation, the Cecil County Public Library installed a Story Trail at Calvert Regional Park.




- Mango Languages bring the world to a home computer by providing users with self-paced language courses that introduce the learner to cultural insights and grammar specific to their language of choice, delivered through native speaker dialogue.
- The library system's Testing & Education Reference Center helps students in high school and college prepare for higher education.
- The Learning Express Library includes tutorials and practice tests which will help students prepare for a wide variety of tests.
- Through the library's HelpNow, students from kindergarten through college, as well as adult learners, job seekers and veterans can connect with tutors who can provide assistance with homework, skill-building and writing.

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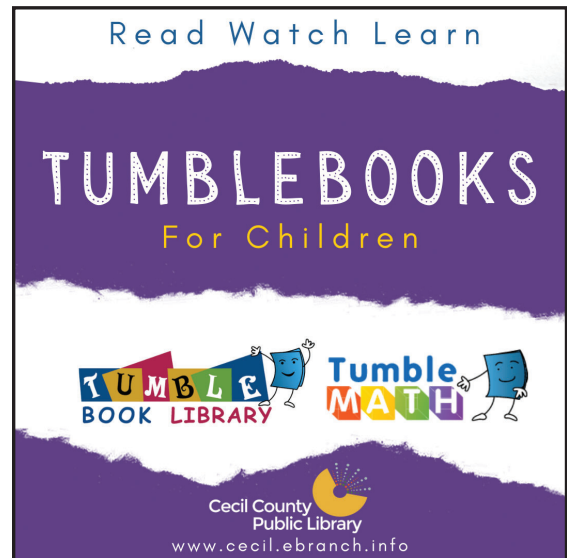
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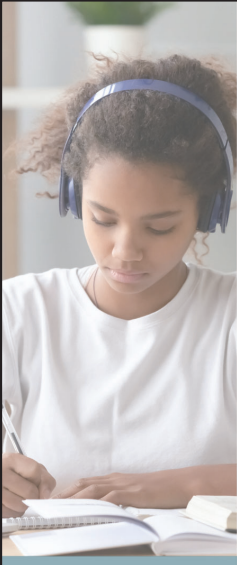
Virtual library


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- The library now offers the opportunity for new users to receive an Online Card, giving them instant access to library resources, classes and digital streaming and downloads.
- The CCPL now offers contactless pickup and printing services at its locations in Cecilton, Chesapeake City, Elkton, Perryville and Rising Sun.
- In a county where reliable internet access is not always available, the library extended strong WiFi signals into the parking lots of all branch locations.
- In partnership with Cecil County Public Schools, students and educators can use their school ID to access CCPL resources and materials.
- Through regular Zoom meetings with businesses and non-profit organizations, the CCPL's Business Information Center has been able to help these agencies create online models that have effectively enabled them to continue to function and succeed during COVID-19.

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Cecil County
Public Library

Although all branches in the Cecil County Public Library system have been closed during the pandemic, library staff has continued to develop strong connections with the local community, students and businesses throughout the county.




How is COVID-19 impacting your small business?

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Virtual library

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- In conjunction with summer reading programs like Students Progress and Read with reading Kits (SPARK), the CCPL's Bookmobile traveled around the county this summer to offer all rising sixth-graders the opportunity to select and keep three books.
- In partnership with Cecil County Parks and Recreation, CCPL installed the county's first Story Trail at Calvert Regional Park. Families can read a story as they hop, skip, jump, or run to find the next page and enjoy fun learning activities along the way.
- In September, the CCPL began to offer "Activities to Go," take-home learning kits for children, teens and families.

'In the emergency of the situation'

"We have attempted to pull our users into our digital spaces at warp speed," Miller said. "Over the past decade, libraries have begun to re-imagine their physical and virtual spaces, and the pandemic has accelerated that direction. In the emergency of the situation, we developed and initiatives that we had been discussing for quite some time.

"In the past, we would have taken months to create these new platforms, and now we're doing it practically overnight,



The North East Branch of the Cecil County Public Library system is scheduled to open in 2021.

and that has allowed us to trust ourselves more as an organization."

The work that Miller and the CCPL staff have been doing during the pandemic has been woven into a five-phase punch list of progression that ultimately will lead to the last phase – the projected reopening of its seven branches in 2021.

"We're currently and actively pursuing Phase Four, which is probably our most significant hurdle to cross, from the standpoint of determining our internal preparedness," Miller said. "In order to reopen our

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We encourage local organizations, schools, civic and fraternal groups and churches to submit news releases.

PUBLISHED BY AD PRO., INC. Randall S. Lieberman - Publisher

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