

# News from your Friends

Season 42, Issue 2

Friends of the East Longmeadow Public Library, Inc.



## Winter News



### Friends' President— Diane Tiago

Hello, my Friends!

I can't believe it! It's 2026 already! I sincerely hope everyone had happy, healthy holiday celebrations. In this newsletter I will update you on what we did in the fall and what we are planning to do in the near future.

Two Saturdays in the fall, members of the board set up stations at the Celebrate East Longmeadow event that took place in Center Field on September 27<sup>th</sup> as well as at the October Fest celebration on October 11<sup>th</sup> at Brown Farm. We met quite a few attendees who became curious about our role in town and we were more than happy to explain.

We shared that one goal is to raise funds that will fill the gaps between the library's operating budget and the services it provides our community. In the past we have paid for needed furnishings and equipment. And, if you have attended a program at the library, then you know that there is never any charge to participate. It is with funds from the Friends and other generous entities that cover the cost of these enjoyable programs. Another major purpose of all Friends of Library organizations is to advocate for libraries, of course! Whether there is a library issue that has come under scrutiny like banning selective books or the need for additional funds, it is important to contact our state and federal representatives and have our "voices" heard.

Gift basket fundraisers are always fun for all who partake and I would like to thank my officers, directors and volunteers who created another sensational variety last fall. I imagine that the display made it difficult for some individuals to decide which respective receptacle to drop a raffle ticket in. Congratulations to those lucky winners who won a basket as well as my sincere appreciation to everyone who participated.



Looking forward I recommend that you mark your calendars for more entertaining endeavors. First, we will be conducting our annual "Winter Wonderland Gift Baskets" fundraiser from Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup> through Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>. The drawing will take place on Thursday, February 19<sup>th</sup>. I wonder what those creative imaginations will invent this time.

Next, on Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, we will hold another bake sale from 10 a.m. to 1p.m. in the library's lobby. We will be sending out a survey shortly and hope that some of you will join us and bake a mouthwatering treat that will be absolutely irresistible. Based on last years' experience, bakery aficionados should arrive when the doors open. Our goods sold fast!

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Do we have any hockey fans? If so, set aside Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:05 PM. There will be a Friends of the East Longmeadow Public Library night at the MassMutual Center thanks to the Springfield Thunderbirds. The Thunderbirds will be facing the Iowa Wild. Discounted tickets will cost \$23 per person and a request has been made to please try and secure your seats two weeks prior to the game in order to guarantee seats



with our group. To order your tickets in advance just click on this link:

[https://springfieldthunderbirds.formstack.com/forms/friends\\_of\\_el\\_public\\_library\\_fundraiser](https://springfieldthunderbirds.formstack.com/forms/friends_of_el_public_library_fundraiser)

Ordering an engraved brick just got more interesting. Toni Raczkowski, our Chairperson for the Literacy Path, learned that in addition to letters of the alphabet, symbols can be engraved on the bricks, too. After receiving approval from the town, our application forms now include symbols for a heart, an open book, a star and a warrior (ELHS sports logo). The engraving of a symbol is more involved and therefore, an additional \$5 fee is required. The cost of a brick is \$75.

This is our **5th** year offering the Norma and Bernard Vinick Memorial Scholarship Awards. Applications are now available on our website and at the library. Once again, there will be 3-\$1,000 scholarships presented. Applicants must 1) be a resident of East Longmeadow 2) be a graduating public or private high school senior and 3) entering their freshman year as a full-time student at an accredited college in the fall of 2026. The scholarship committee will be looking for applicants that have volunteered and/or participated in programs at the East Longmeadow Public Library.



Lastly, we have a couple of seats available on the board. If you are interested or curious, we meet 6 times a year on Tuesday evenings at the library's Conference Room at 6:30 p.m. I do my best to keep our meetings contained to approximately 1 hour. Contact [foelpl@gmail.com](mailto:foelpl@gmail.com) and I will respond to your email. Any member is welcome to attend a meeting and no special invitation is required. Come, sit, listen and share your thoughts. We'd appreciate your input.

## Director's Dialogue

Katie McGonigle, Library Director

As we begin a new calendar year, I find myself reflecting on the many ways our library has grown and the exciting opportunities that lie ahead.

2025 brought meaningful progress to our physical spaces, including several recent updates. With the assistance of the DPW, we refreshed multiple areas of the library with a fresh coat of paint, including the Conference Room, Teen Area, stairwell, and lobby. We also installed a new East Longmeadow Streets Map and are finalizing long-term plans with Creative Library Concepts for a thoughtful redesign of our public spaces to better meet patrons' ever-evolving use of the library.

I am thrilled to share that we recently secured five MOD ADA Municipal Improvement Grants, as well as an MBI Connected and Online Grant, to support important building improvements planned for 2026. These grants will allow us to install new flooring in the lobby, update signage, replace the water fountain with a water filling station, and install SmartBoards and desktop workstations in the two Study Rooms. These enhancements will significantly improve accessibility, usability, and comfort for all patrons.

I am deeply grateful for The Friends of East Longmeadow Public Library's continued advocacy and generosity. Because of YOU, our library is able to do so much for our community. Thank you especially for your continued support of libraries especially as libraries faced potential funding cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Your voices matter. I encourage you to continue supporting libraries through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners' [It All Starts at the Library FY2027](#) legislative agenda. The [funding flow chart](#) provides helpful context on how the MBLC uses state funds to sustain essential library services across the Commonwealth, and why advocacy at the state level is so critical.

Your generosity throughout the year also made an extraordinary impact on our programming and outreach efforts. Because of the Friends, we were able to offer a wide variety of programs for patrons of all ages and

strengthen our community connections through shared outreach at local events.

In addition, your dedication shines through in the many ways you support the library, from the generous gift baskets provided for your three annual raffles, to the ongoing book sale, bake sale, hockey game fundraiser, BookPage and Swank Licensing, annual book donations, and so much more!

Thank you for standing with the library, for advocating when it matters most, and for believing in the power of libraries to strengthen communities. I am truly grateful for all that you do, and I look forward to all we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

## Children's Chatter

Michele Lemire, Children's Librarian

The Children's Department enjoyed an incredible Fall 2025 filled with engaging and enriching programs for children and families. Thanks to the generous support of the Friends of the Library, we were able to offer a wide variety of programs, including monthly art programs, STEAM activities, music programs, book groups, and many other exciting events.

We were also proud to partner with **Pathways for Parents**, a Family and Community Grant funded by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, to provide programming for children from birth to age six. These offerings included storytimes, STEAM sessions, yoga, music programs, and parent workshops, all designed to support early learning and family engagement.

In December, we celebrated our **Annual Giving Tree Program** in collaboration with **All Our Kids**, a foster care organization dedicated to building community, raising awareness of the foster care system, and encouraging community involvement. Our patrons demonstrated remarkable generosity, donating toys and toiletries to support **298 children** in the All Our Kids foster care system across Western Massachusetts.

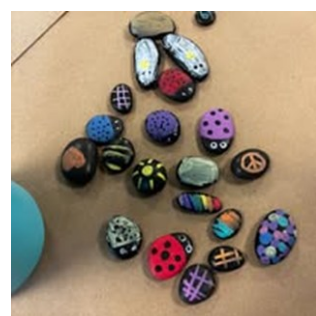
The start of 2026 has been equally busy and exciting. Building on the success of our summer and fall programming, we continue to offer art programs, STEAM activities, storytimes, and book groups through May 2026. During winter break, families will enjoy movie screenings, art sessions, drop-in LEGO building, and a cozy PJ storytime.



Looking ahead, we are thrilled to announce the return of the **Boston Bruins PJ Drive**, running from **February 15 through March 15**. This year marks our **ninth year** participating in this wonderful initiative. We will be collecting new children's pajamas to benefit local children in need through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). As part of this Friends-sponsored event, we will host a **Bruins PJ Story Night on February 18, 2026**, featuring Boomer from the Springfield Thunderbirds and Mrs. O'Brien, librarian from Meadowbrook Elementary School. Together, they will share stories and lead crafts, creating a fun and memorable evening for families. Each pajama donation will earn patrons an entry into a raffle to win **four tickets to a Springfield Thunderbirds hockey game**. This initiative also supports a Friends-sponsored group outing to the Springfield Thunderbirds game on **Friday, March 6, at 7:05 PM**.

We are deeply grateful to the Friends of the Library for their continued and unwavering support of the Children's Department. Their generosity and commitment make it possible to offer a wide range of programs that enrich the lives of children and families in our community.

The feedback from our patrons speaks volumes about the impact of these programs. Families regularly express their appreciation for the creativity, engagement, and joy these experiences bring into their lives. From inspiring young minds through hands-on learning to fostering meaningful connections through stories and crafts, these programs are truly transformative.



*Photos from Fall 2025 children's programs.*

## Information Services

Maura Mara, Adult Services Librarian

The library is a welcoming space for everyone. We continually strive to provide information services and programming to meet the needs of our community. Whether it is in our building or outreach at another location, the library wants to be a resource for everyone.

Every other Wednesday at 3 p.m., a group gathers in the library's conference room to share needlework tips and tricks. You'll find knitters and crochet enthusiasts working alongside someone with a needlepoint project or a cross stitch pattern. There are plenty of hats, scarves, and mittens in progress. It truly is a great group that is always welcoming new people to come in and enjoy their company. This is just one of the ways the public library provides space and activity for our community.

The library is hosting a Community Blood Drive with Baystate Health on Monday February 23rd 10:00am - 2:00pm. If you are interested in taking part, we are registering people for 10 minute slots. You can [register at this link](#) or call the library. Donating blood is a simple, safe act of generosity that supports communities and helps people in critical situations

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the East Longmeadow Public Library we are able to provide our community with engaging programs and activities. This past fall we collaborated with the Council on Aging and brought in Dr. Randi Lebar who gave a wonderful presentation on Music and Dementia. Her mother was a pianist and maintained her ability to play the piano through her mental decline. Look up her Tik Tok videos; you will be amazed and it will bring you joy..

Upcoming programs to watch for include Adult Craft Nights, Origami, Chair Yoga, Book Groups, Cookbook Club and a Spring Birding Discussion with Mass Audubon.



## Teen Department Update

Erica Petrosky, Teen Librarian

The cold weather hasn't slowed our teens down one bit! As we moved into the "burr" months, teen engagement at the library continued to grow.

We wrapped up 2025 with an abundance of fun and well-attended programming. Winter Crafternoons were buzzing with teens after school, eager to create wreaths, holiday cards and wrapping paper, sock penguins, and DIY last-minute gifts. Teens especially love crafting while listening to music and enjoying snacks. During the holiday season, Crafternoons also included festive movies and plenty of hot chocolate. Our annual Teen Cookie Swap was another highlight, with teens baking and sharing their favorite cookie recipes. Thanks to the Friends, we were able to offer a full hot cocoa bar with caramel, marshmallows, candy canes, hot fudge, whipped cream, and sprinkles. Friends' funds also allowed us to purchase additional treats so teens who couldn't bring homemade baked goods could still participate and feel included.

December also brought another successful Half-Day Hangout. We launched this program after noticing an influx of teens at the library following early dismissal days from school. Starting around 11 a.m., the Community Room is ready for them with table games, crafts, waffle-making, snacks, video games, and more. It has quickly become a favorite!

We kicked off the new year by refreshing the teen space with new themes. One bulletin board invites teens to share a resolution for the year, while another highlights "Ways to Beat the Winter Blues", featuring tips like opening your curtains, laughing often, and asking for help when you need it. Our winter programming schedule continues to draw strong crowds, with monthly clubs such as Writing Group and Fandom Club, more Winter Crafternoons, and Teen Spot on Fridays.

Specialty food programs remain a big favorite. At our recent Teen Test Kitchen, the Community Room was transformed into five cooking stations. Teens worked in small groups, rotating through stations to learn how to make air fryer pizza, instant ramen upgrades, fried donuts, Dalgona coffee, and marshmallow popcorn balls. It felt like dining in a pop-up restaurant! More recently, we hosted Cupcake Wars, where each teen received two cupcakes and had 30 minutes to create edible masterpieces based on two surprise themes: magical and book cover. The surprise twist halfway through? Competitors swapped book covers and had to adapt their designs on the fly, leading to plenty of laughs (and a few grumbles). Thanks to the Friends, the grand prize winner received a \$20 Uber Eats gift card, and two runners-up received Starbucks gift cards. The Friends' generosity also covered all ingredients for both food programs, making these high-energy events possible.

Teen services continue to thrive thanks to the Friends' ongoing support. Your contributions directly impact the quality and creativity of our programs, and our teens feel that support every time they walk through the door. Thank you for helping us make the library a place where teens feel welcome and excited to be!





## Halloween Contest!

I hope you had a chance to vote for your favorite “pumpkin”! The library showcased the entries from all of the town departments.

The winners were from the Town Clerks’ Office (with Bubbles, the Candy Corn Fish), “Prisoner O’ Lantern” from Police Department, and “Marion, the Librarian” from Town Library!

Congrats to all. What creative folks we have working for the town.

## *News from your Friends*

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If this newsletter is not reaching the correct party as printed on the address label, please let us know. Call the library or email us at [foelpl@gmail.com](mailto:foelpl@gmail.com) with the correction.

Thank you.

## *2026 Calendar of Events*

January 24—February 18

Winter Basket Raffle

Circulation Desk area

February 7

Bake sale

10 am—1 pm

Library Lobby

February 19

Raffle winners drawn

March 3

Friends Board Meeting

Community Room

6:30 p.m.

**Library's website:**

[eastlongmeadowlibrary.org](http://eastlongmeadowlibrary.org)

**Friends' website:**

[foelpl.wixsite.com/friendsellibrary](http://foelpl.wixsite.com/friendsellibrary)

