

The Western Sun

The Western Library System's Monthly Newsletter

Summer Reading 2025 Wrap-Up



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Bayard Public Library



The Bayard Public Library had an awesome summer reading program this year, with climbing attendance and great fun for all of our readers. We offered 8 weeks of activities. 70 readers signed up, and our attendance averaged 60 for each activity. The program kicked off with a visit from Riverside Discovery Center, who brought several friendly creatures for everyone to pet and learn about. We had several fun adventures including watercolor painting, plush animal stuffing and adoption, and a tie-dye workshop (which was just as messy as it was fun!). In addition, we had a special visit from the magician Byron Grey of Wyoming. At this magic show, we served snow cones and had close to 100 in attendance. To wrap up this amazing summer, we hosted a swimming party for our readers at Westmoor Pool in Scottsbluff. 77 people joined us for swimming and ice cream treats! This year's summer reading program proved to be a challenge due to climbing numbers, but we handled it with enthusiasm and had a great time cultivating great readers and creatives in our community.

-Becky Henkel, Director

Bridgeport Public Library

This summer marked an exciting milestone for the Bridgeport Public Library in Nebraska as the library launched its very first Teen Summer Reading Program. Thanks to a \$100 grant from the Western Library System, the program was able to provide creative and hands-on experiences for local teens.

The program was planned and organized by the library's Teen Advisory Group (TAG), a dedicated group of teens who help shape activities for their peers. With their input, the summer lineup featured unique opportunities that went beyond books. One highlight was a photography class where teens learned how to use manual cameras—some of which were borrowed from the Nebraska Library Commission—to capture images in a variety of scenarios. We then printed and framed our favorites and displayed them at the final event we called Art in the Park.

Another favorite was the Teen Paint and Sip event, where TAG members prepared colorful Italian Cream Sodas for their peers to enjoy while painting together. This fun twist on a traditional art night gave teens a chance to relax, sip, and get creative.

The Bridgeport Public Library is proud to see the Teen Summer Reading Program off to such a strong start and looks forward to building on this success in future years. By giving teens a space to explore, create, and connect, the library continues to grow as a hub for learning and community, and the grant from the WLS gave us the much-needed funds to do it.

-Melissa Butler, Director

Broadwater Public Library



Our Little Library in Broadwater, NE received a Summer Reading Grant from the Western Library System. With that we were able to add a few fun projects for the kids to do.

We had a Movie Night with the Teens, They had popcorn and we purchased a movie that they all wanted to see. We also had a movie afternoon for the little ones, with snacks.

We purchased some metal spinners that the Teens were able to sublimate with beautiful designs in our maker space.

The Little ones also had plastic book markers that looked like jars and put live flowers in them that we picked from the flowers around our Library.

**The Teens had a game night with Pizza!
The extra funds were so much appreciated.**

-Rachelle Eversole, Director

Crawford Public Library

Another Chapter Finished at the Crawford Public Library



The Crawford Public Library's summer reading program had its grand finale on August 1st with an end of program party. "The amount and variety of reading that happened this summer has blown my socks off," relates librarian, Ashy Blacksheep. "Last year we had 26 participants who read almost 500 books over the course of the program. This year, we had 38 ranging in age from 2 years old to 79, and together we read 924 books!"

Readers were encouraged to try new genres with a Summer Reading Bingo card whose bingos or blackouts earned them additional entries for the end of program prizes. This summer's program also featured 30 events and activities for all age groups with a collective attendance of 317.

Of the many events, some of the most well attended and anticipated events were the arts and crafts events made possible by WLS funding for the supplies. Children and their families crafted one-of-a-kind jigsaw puzzles, suncatchers, and bubble wands. "A little goes a long way for my younger patrons," says Blacksheep. "With things as simple as cardstock, pipe cleaners, beads, and markers, they spent hours over this summer flexing their creativity and using those materials in new ways. It means a lot to them to take a piece of their time at the library home with them." Blacksheep already has ideas brewing for next year's summer reading program.

-Ashtyn "Ashy" Blacksheep, Director

Gering Public Library

NERF-ageddon at Gering Public Library



Utilizing funds given to us by Western Nebraska Library System, the Gering Public Library was able to purchase tactical masks and foam darts for our “NERF-ageddon” NERF battle event for teens as part of our Summer Reading Program. We partnered with the Gering Middle School’s summer school program to hold an additional NERF battle in the morning with their students, followed by the main event in the afternoon for any teens in the community.

We had 17 teens participate in the morning event, and 13 teens battled it out in the afternoon. We met at a local park where we had set up barriers using wood pallets and cardboard boxes for participants to hide behind. Each teen was given a NERF gun, preloaded with 6 darts, and a tactical mask to protect their eyes and face. They were divided into two teams and played several rounds of a modified version of “capture the flag.” All the participants had a lot of fun!

We ended the event with a free-for-all, last-person-standing battle. Players formed alliances against all the other players, only to have one of them betray the other in dramatic fashion. We had so much fun that we’ve talked about having more NERF battles in the future.

Thank you to the Western Nebraska Library System for their generous donation that made this fun event possible! We are excited to use the gear for future events.

-Jeff Fiet, Youth Services Library Assistant

Gordon City Library



Kids, Kindergarten through 5th grade explored four of the continents this summer using their imaginations at the Gordon City Library. We kicked off our program with a visit from a local traveler and retired teacher, Mrs. Russell, who shared pictures and souvenirs from each of her overseas trips. The kids loved exploring the sites through her eyes and hearing special recollections of her travels. As the program continued through the two weeks, each day offered a “visit” to a different location with a story and craft based on traditions from that area.

Creations included painting boomerangs with Aboriginal dot-art while visiting Australia, designing and creating clay pots with traditional African designs, constructing a Koi wind-catcher, and stringing beaded necklaces featuring imitation bear claws or coyote teeth. Twenty-five readers registered and attended in two sessions.

The smaller kids (K-2nd grade) enjoyed a variety of books by individual authors, and Miss Amy’s Australian accent while reading a story about kangaroos was a favorite. For the older kids (3rd-5th grade), the highlight of the two weeks was reading through “Around the World in 80 Days” adapted for young readers. Funds received from the Western Library System made many of the crafts and prizes possible. We appreciate the resources and hard work that Cindy and her team put together to support our 2024 Summer Reading Program!

-Rachael Price, Director

Grant County Library



This year at the Grant County Library, we "Colored Our World" in multiple ways. As soon as school was released for the summer in mid-May, children were able to pick up their challenge sheets and start earning tickets. They can then use those tickets to shop at our "Library Store" for different trinkets from art supplies to games to stuffed animals. This is self paced and they can spend their tickets at any time up through the first week of August. We partnered with the Grant County 4H to do a community service project. 22 children and several adults painted 14 trash barrels to be placed around our county fair grounds and 4H buildings. The children that helped took a lot of pride in showing off our barrels and it added some color to the grounds. Our first in house fun day, we painted bird houses, did foil painting and painted dream catchers. We had entertainment in June with Magician/Comedian Toby Kid. He was very fun and the children and adults both enjoyed the show. On our last fun day, we did fly swatter painting. That was interesting, but what a fun project! Thanks to a donation from a local patron, we always give away a tablet to a lucky winner. For completing a challenge sheet, participants earn a ticket into the drawing for the tablet. Thank you to the Western Library System for the grant. We used ours on art supplies for this years theme.

-Jennifer Holthus, Director

Hayes Center Public Library



Twenty-one youngsters participated in the Summer Reading Program at the Hayes Center Public Library on Monday afternoons during the month of June. Leading the activities were Hayes County Extension Educators Kimberly Cook & Bailey Abbott assisted by Tiffani Miller, office manager. The theme this year was “Color Our World” which inspired fun and educational creative craft projects, STEM experiments and diversity art projects to spark the imagination. Youngsters enjoyed listening to books read to them each week and discovering color combinations, for example: mixing colors of frosting on paper plates before eating their cupcake creations.

The last day the children enjoyed nutty treats provided by the library. Sadie Richards and Adeline Gohl were the winners of the book giveaway. Library Director Deb Lawson expressed her appreciation of the Extension Educators who give so much effort to youngsters during the summer vacation. “The Summer Reading Program is a good way to get the young ones into the habit of checking out and returning books on a regular basis”, commented Lawson. “A record number of books were being read by those who participated!”

-Deb Lawson, Director

Hooker County Library



The Hooker County Library held our Summer Reading Program on June 12, 2025. We had an attendance of 18 children along with 3 great helpers who are a little older. We enjoyed a story, some fun activities, a movie and then made our stuffed animals. This is something we've done for several years now and the kids look forward to it. The children are able to win prizes for reading until school starts in the fall, this is open to all children. We then hosted Toby KID on June 16th, he was a great entertainer with a very good message for the kids, this was also well attended.

-Julie Pfeiffer, Director

Lied Scottsbluff Public Library



On Tuesday, June 12, Lied Scottsbluff Public Library hosted a hydro dipping, tie dye, and splatter art event for our Teen Summer Reading Program. We had planned to hold the event outside, but mother nature had other plans and we were moved into the library's community room. Last year, we had done a hydro dipping event for teens, which was our most popular teen event of the summer. This year, we were excited that hydro dipping fit so well under the Color Our World theme, and thought that also doing tie dye and splatter paint would be a fun addition to give teens more to do.

We used funding from the Western Library System to purchase a large tie dye kit and 30 pairs of white cotton socks for teens to dye. Our other supplies for this program included watered down paint, canvases, paint brushes and sponges for splatter paint, and buckets of water, plastic and glass jars, and Marabu Easy Marble paint for hydro dipping.

Overall, the event went well despite having to be indoors. We had 20 teens attend, and all of the socks got dyed and jars got hydro dipped. We also had a few teens bring things from home to hydro dip, including acrylic containers and Crocs.

-Liz Perez, Youth Services Librarian

Mitchell Public Library



I received \$100 from the Western Library System. My program went for the month of June, and we had crafts/projects for two weeks. In those two weeks we learned of various artists, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claude Monet, Bob Ross, Rembrandt, Frida Kahlo, Leonardo Da Vinci, Johannes Vermeer, Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso and Michelangelo. Our coloring contest photos were "The Girl with the Pearl Earring" by Johannes Vermeer and our older coloring contest was "The Last Supper" by Leonardo Da Vinci. Coloring book and crayons were given as prizes. Scratch Bookmarks were our first day project. These were interesting and the creativity by the kids to decorate these was fabulous. We made a trip over to the CornerStone Coffee Shop where we were shown the art of making coffee and snow cones by owner, treats we were able to indulge in while watching the process. We made hand puppets that were quite the challenge. And last we enjoyed a movie at the Mitchell theater and snacks were provided for all attendees.

-Priscilla Plasencio, Circulation Assistant

Nancy Fawcett Memorial Library



The Nancy Fawcett Memorial Library's 2025 Summer Reading Program was once again a great success and a lot of fun, thanks to the dedicated efforts of our wonderful library board volunteers and the generous support from the Western Library System. We enjoyed strong attendance, plenty of exciting reading incentive prizes, and activities that included planting sunflowers and marigolds, as well as scavenger and treasure hunts after story times. The program concluded with a lively finale featuring a water balloon bash and squirt gun fun. It has truly been an honor to share this summer's reading journey with the children and our community.

-Dana Hill, Director

Palisade Public Library



For our Summer Reading Program, we followed the theme of Color Our World. We had twenty kids join us on Mondays in June ages 2 -13. We read the book Primer to the older kids which was about the primary colors. Books read to our younger children were Pete the Kitty's Outdoor Art Project, Pete the Kitty and the Unicorn's Missing Colors as well as some other children's favorites. I read for about 20 minutes every time and we finished the book on the last day. We had a new craft we would do each time.

One highlight of our SRP was Jeff Quinn the magician. We shared his performance with the community also. Fun time enjoyed by all!

-Lilian Sandoval, Director

Paxton Public Library



The Paxton Public Library held summer reading Mondays and Thursdays during the month of June.

Hadleigh Kramer facilitated the summer reading for a National Honor project.

-Dianne Jay, Director

Potter Public Library



The Potter Public Library held an all-day Summer Reading Camp on Wednesday, June 11th. Students listened to color-themed books, played color-themed games, studied basic color theory, and created beautiful art. The art will be displayed until the first of August for the community to view. As parents arrived at the end of the day, they were encouraged to help their child choose books to check out from the library. Students were sent home with a bag that was filled with a reading challenge and many color-related items. Those who complete the reading challenge will be invited back in August for a Reading Celebration Party!

-Jodi Enevoldsen, Director

Sioux County Public Library



Sioux County Public Library had a very busy summer! Our Summer Reading began May 14th and wrapped up on July 11th. We had a total of 25 kids actively participating in Summer Reading and they collectively read a whopping 1,085 books! I'm very proud to see these kids demonstrate a love for reading and hope this carries with them throughout the years.

We would also like to give a huge thank you to the Western Library System (WLS) for their generosity of the Summer Reading Grant. With the grant the kids were able to have a Paint and Snack program, plant flowers in the Butterfly Garden, and enjoy a movie night! In addition, Trooper Flick from the Nebraska State Patrol visited our library and taught us the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the importance of being kind to each other. Amanda Fillipi from the Wildcat Hills Nature Center taught us about animals who use camouflage in the wild. We even had Aaron Fowler and his loveable dog Kuumba visit and we sang songs and told some pretty silly stories! Our favorite program was the Color Fight. Instead of battling it out with water balloons we used slime! What a fun messy day that was!

Thank you again to WLS and their generosity that has given our local kids additional access to summer learning and activities!

-Sarah Sanderson, Director

Stratton Public Library

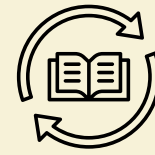


Color Your World summer reading program found the kids incorporating color through different means of learning. The first week kids learned how emotions and colors work together. They made paint blown color monsters after reading *The Color Monster* and then built monsters from rice Krispie bars while discussing emotions. The next week found the kids learning how animals use camouflage as prey or predator. They enjoyed the book *Secrets of Animal Camouflage*. They had to go on an M&M hunt through a camouflage habitat and hunt for hidden moths throughout the library. Then came the fun of building a camouflage trail mix. Week three involved reading the book *Eating the Rainbow*. They connected pictures to a poster showing which part of the body benefits from different colors of foods. This was followed by making fruit waffle pizzas and doing an experiment with M&Ms to make a beautiful rainbow. Week four was the annual celebration of reading. The kids enjoyed a water party and root beer floats.

The students learned slug facts as they moved their slug down the path for each book read during the month. We had a good attendance during the month, and the kids are still checking out books! Coupons to be used at local businesses as well as prizes for their reading accomplishments were awarded at the end of the Summer Reading Program.

-Teri Faimon, Director

Continuing Education Opportunities from the Nebraska Library Commission



Upcoming NCompass Live Webcasts

nlc.nebraska.gov/NCompassLive

Title	Date & Time	Registration
NCompass Live: Letters About Literature 2025	Oct. 1, 10am-11am (Central)	Register
NCompass Live: The Do's & Don'ts of D&D	Oct. 8, 10am-11am (Central)	Register
NCompass Live: Nebraska Celebration of Books 2025	Oct. 29, 10am-11am (Central)	Register

Upcoming Basic Skills Courses

nlc.nebraska.gov/CE/BasicSkills

Class Dates	Class	Registration Dates
10/20–10/31	Management/Supervision	9/8–10/10
11/3–11/14	Leadership	9/15–10/24
12/1–12/12	Library Services to Children & Teens	10/20–11/21

Grant Opportunities



Infinite Sums Rural & Small Libraries Cohort Grant Program

<https://www.arsl.org/infinite-sums-grant>

The Infinite Sums Rural & Small Libraries Cohort Grant Program is supported by the Simons Foundation as part of its Infinite Sums national initiative and offered in partnership with SciStarter. The Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL) is proud to offer this educational training experience and financial support to small and rural libraries across the U.S.

Fifteen library workers will be selected to host math inspired community-wide events for patrons of all ages on Pi Day, Infinity Day, and Fibonacci Day in 2026. Cohort members will attend monthly virtual training sessions and two in-person gatherings.

Apply by September 30, 2025 for a chance to receive:

1. \$10,000 program grant
2. A year-long learning cohort experience
3. Support for events on Pi Day (3/14), Infinity Day (8/8), and Fibonacci Day (11/23) in 2026
4. Two in-person gatherings (NYC & ARSL 2026 Conference in Montgomery, AL)

Who can apply:

1. Public libraries in the U.S.
2. Must serve a small and/or rural community
3. ARSL membership not required

Don't miss out - submit your application today at <https://www.arsl.org/infinite-sums-grant>

For questions about grant eligibility, email info@arsl.org.

Grant Opportunities



Fern V. Heim Trustee Scholarship

nlc.nebraska.gov/Grants/CE/HeimScholarshipGrant.aspx

*****This scholarship is open only to current Nebraska Public Library Board Members!*****

The Fern V. Heim Scholarship Award was established to provide assistance to current public library board members with preference to members of the Nebraska Library Association Public Library and Trustee Section (PLTS) for attendance to the [Nebraska Library Association Conference](#) or the [Association for Rural and Small Libraries Conference](#).

Applications due by Friday, October 3, 2025

For more details and application:

- [Fern V. Heim Library Trustee Scholarship Grant Application](#)
- [NLA Conference Website](#)

Please submit all grant application forms and questions to:

Holli Duggan (she/her)

Continuing Education Coordinator

Nebraska Library Commission

(402) 471-2694

holli.duggan@nebraska.gov

Creative Aging Arts Program (CAAP)

www.artscouncil.nebraska.gov/apply/creative-aging/

The Nebraska Arts Council announces special funding available for CAAP artist residencies in Nebraska public libraries during fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).

CAAP provides older adults with creative and educational arts activities along with opportunities for socialization.

Apply for CAAP grants at least six weeks ahead. Grants cover most or all expenses. Funds are limited, and grants are processed first-come, first-served.

Find complete information here: [**Creative Aging Arts Program - Nebraska Arts Council**](#)

General questions: **Anne Alston**, anne.alston@nebraska.gov

Grant application questions: **Joshua Brown**, joshua.brown@nebraska.gov

WLS Board News

Congratulations to two Western Library System Board Members for receiving scholarships to attend the 2025 Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico!



Amber Sweetland, Kimball Public Library, received the Dr. Bernard Vavrek LIS Scholarship



Christie Clarke, Gering Public Library, received a NLC Continuing Education and Training Grant



Western Library System

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