

Appleton Public Library



OUR MISSION

**Learn, know, gather,
grow – your center
of community life.**

OUR VISION

**Where potential
is transformed
into reality.**

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Director's Message

As I reflect on the past year, I am overwhelmed with lessons of resilience and support. 2023 wasn't easy. The library experienced substantial challenges, but they were addressed with the kindness and generosity that define our community and the library.

I'm deeply moved by the remarkable spirit of our staff, who, despite working in incredibly cramped quarters at our temporary locations, consistently showed concern for my well-being and that of their colleagues and our patrons. Their resilience, creativity, and positive attitude, even in less-than-ideal circumstances, exemplify the library's enduring spirit and commitment to service.

Our journey toward a new library has been fueled by community support. The generosity of the Thompson Center on Lourdes, offering their future location when they learned of our need to relocate, stands as a powerful example of that support. This gesture not only ensured our ability to continue providing critical library services, but also strengthened the fabric of our community partnerships.

One of the most heartening experiences this year was the groundbreaking ceremony for our new library. I heard from many community members who shared how being back on the library site, participating in this milestone event, provided them with a sense of community and connection that had been scarce since the pandemic. This moment was a reminder of the library's role as a beacon of hope, resilience, and unity.

When talking about resilience and support, the work of Friends of Appleton Public Library, the capital campaign committee, and the hundreds of generous donors who have contributed to the building project deserve special mention. Many donations have been made in honor of loved ones, deepening the meaning behind each contribution.

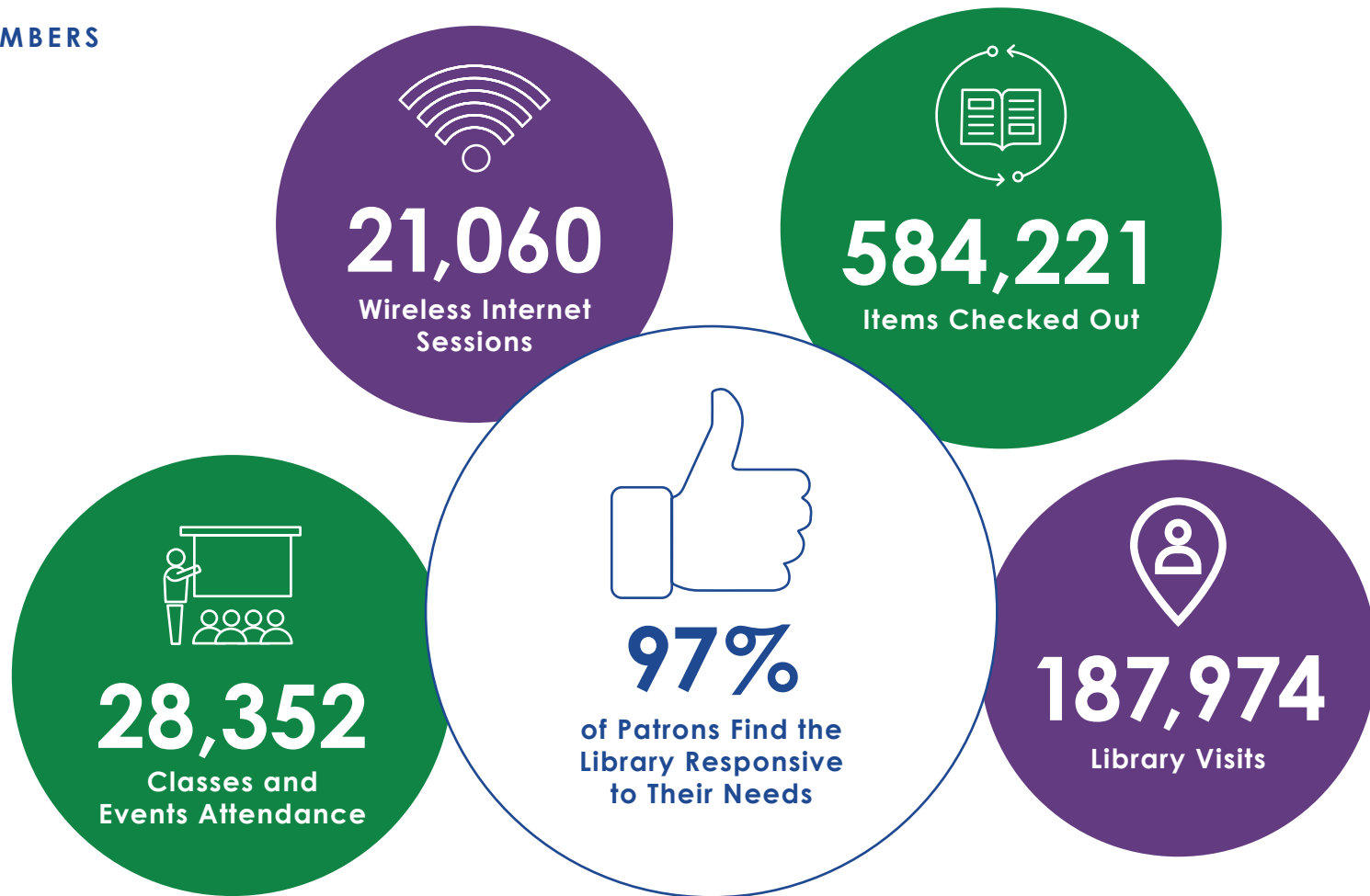
I am grateful for the lessons of this past year - that kindness, generosity, and a community united in support of one another are our superpower. These principles will guide us as we continue to serve our community and work toward our library's vision of transforming potential into reality.

With gratitude and excitement for what lies ahead,

COLLEEN RORTVEDT,
LIBRARY DIRECTOR



BY THE NUMBERS



EXPENSES AND REVENUES

\$4,691,854.00

Expenses

\$5,883,662.00

Capital Expenses

\$1,190,656.00

Revenues

\$110,424.00

Grants



A special thank you to Friends of Appleton Public Library - who use donations to grant funds to support the library's mission. Friends' grants are essential in our ability to provide innovative and creative library programs and services. We are grateful to have a strong partnership.

\$55K

in Grant Funds
received in 2023



\$1.85M

in Grants Received
Since 2000

128

Programs and Special
Projects Funded
in 2023



We support and sustain education for all ages.



STORYTIMES

Our storytimes offer educational opportunities, community connections, social/emotional skill building and more.

Through our preschool and toddler programs, trained librarians teach six early literacy skills. Those skills include print motivation, print awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary, narrative skills and phonological awareness. They teach those six skills through the five practices of talking, singing, reading, writing and playing.

In 2023, we offered over 220 storytime programs. We continue to expand our

storytime offerings. Thanks to a grant received from Helen Thom Roemer Trust Fund through the Rotary Club of Appleton, we were able to offer a series of American Sign Language interpreted storytimes. The grant provided funds for an ASL interpreter to join us at our preschool storytimes weekly - helping to create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

In addition, we continued our popular Symphony Storytime and offered storytimes at childcare facilities during the summer - visiting 64 classrooms and serving over 1,000 children.

SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM

Research shows students who don't engage in reading activities throughout the summer are susceptible to losing an average of three months of learning achievement. This loss is cumulative from one year to the next, regardless of the quality of the school.

Helping support the educational needs of our community is a critical library service.

Our summer library program helped to fight summer learning loss by providing

easy access to books and a fun and engaging experience.

There are other important benefits to participating in summer library programs, and they're not just for children and teens. Our adult program offered lifelong learning opportunities which helps lead to a more enriching and fulfilling life.

In total, just over 1,800 adults, teens and kids signed up for the program - a nearly 30% increase from the previous year.



220+

Storytime Programs

“My 4-year-old loved the satisfaction of coloring in coins after completing reading. She reached for books more often - both “reading” to herself and asking to be read to.”

- Parent and Summer Library Program Participant



84%

of Adults Surveyed Reported Learning Something New
by Participating in the Summer Library Program



COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

We connect with partners to share knowledge and information.



THE MONTHLIES PROJECT

Early last year, our teen services team partnered with the Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Region to welcome The Monthlies Project to the library. The Monthlies Project is an initiative providing free menstrual products to students.

Menstrual products are necessary basic hygiene supplies - like soap and toilet paper. Yet for many they're not accessible or affordable. Furthermore, public assistance programs do not allow the purchase of menstrual products.

Studies show period poverty negatively affects girls and women across the world. This includes right here in the Fox Cities. When students lack access to menstrual products it can cause them to be late or even miss class. This affects achievement in school and leads to educational inequity.

By offering free menstrual products, we are helping to combat this issue, raise awareness and improve lives.

A green circular graphic with a white heart and a medical cross symbol. Below the symbol, the text '1,200+' is displayed in large white font, followed by 'Menstrual Products Provided' in a smaller white font. The graphic is set against a dark blue background that resembles a stylized mountain or wave.

1,200+
Menstrual Products
Provided

REACH OUT AND READ

Reach Out and Read gives children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric visits. During visits, pediatricians use a book to engage with children and talk with caregivers about early literacy. Caregivers are also encouraged to visit their local library for more resources. Every child receives a free book following their visit.

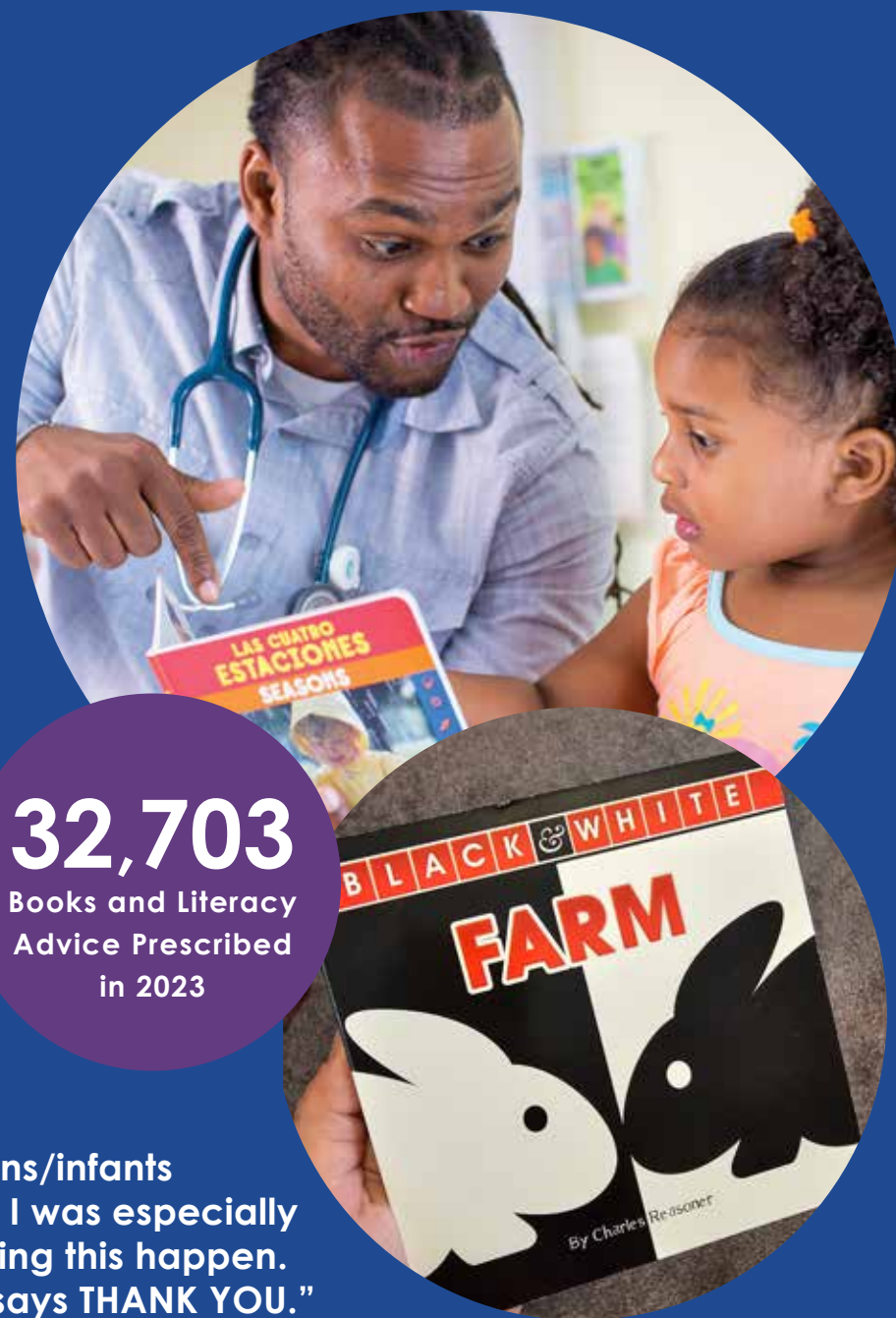
From studies, we know children benefit from reading becoming a part of their lives. Sharing books together creates a lasting, meaningful connection between caregiver and child - fostering healthy brain development during the critical early years of a child's life.

Nearly nine years ago, with the support of United Way Fox Cities, Reach Out and Read Partners - Fox Cities was born. With funding from United Way Fox Cities, we aim to partner with area primary care clinics to make this program a standard of care across the Fox Cities. To date, we have partnered with over 24 clinics, serving an estimated 19,622 children.

Reach Out and Read Partners – Fox Cities is a local affiliate of Reach Out and Read – Wisconsin and the national Reach Out and Read organization. Reach Out and Read is the only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

“Black and white high-contrast books for newborns/infants are a bit more challenging to find in the stores so I was especially thankful for ROR, its partnerships and APL for making this happen. ROR does make a difference and this new mom says THANK YOU.”

- Emely, Reach Out and Read Parent



32,703
Books and Literacy
Advice Prescribed
in 2023

EDUCATE AND INSPIRE YOUTH

**We ensure that
children and teens
find a supportive
place for their futures.**

**“Most families didn’t know how to navigate
the available resources. They didn’t know
what to read to their children. They didn’t
know they could have a free library card.”**

- Norma, Hispanic Family Outreach
Specialist, on the Importance of
Appleton Ready to Read
Outreach Efforts



APPLETON READY TO READ

This year marks the ten-year anniversary of our Appleton Ready to Read initiative.

We created Appleton Ready to Read in response to the 2011 Fox Cities LIFE Study. The study showed a decline in local third grade reading scores with a high concentration from children who speak English as their second language, primarily Appleton's Hispanic and Hmong populations.

Appleton Ready to Read is an outreach program for multilingual families with children ages birth to five. The program has three parts. Our Hispanic and Hmong Outreach Specialists reach out to families to introduce themselves. They visit with families, bringing them materials and talking to them about the importance of reading and writing. Then they invite the families to the library to learn about available resources. For the third part of the program, staff encourage families to join the free programs available at the library. These programs are intentionally designed to prepare children for kindergarten.

This model allows us to find families in need and assist caregivers with the development of their child's early literacy skills – preparing them to be successful in school.

Additionally, our outreach coordinators found there was a need for continued support as children reached school age. Because of this, they developed our school-age Multicultural ELL Club. The club helps connect children and families to organizations by hosting literacy activities at the library and throughout the community.

Founding donors include the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, J.J. Keller Foundation, U.S Venture, Appleton Area School District, Outagamie County Birth-3 Early Intervention, Fox Cities Literacy Council, UW-Oshkosh Head Start, Bemis Company, Will and Ruth Bloedow, Bouwer Family Foundation, Friends of Appleton Public Library and Thrivent Financial Foundation.



800+
Multicultural
Program Participants



CARING FOR TEENS TOILETRY DRIVE

Our Teen Ambassadors are a group of teens who meet monthly. They discuss ideas, stay up to date on library news and help shape programming.

Last spring, they came up with the idea of creating a toiletry drive benefiting their peers. They were instrumental in the planning, creation and decision-making of the campaign. They worked as a team to create promotional materials and sort and organize all donated items.

The "Caring for Teens" toiletry drive was a smashing success. With the support of donations from the community, they collected hundreds of toiletry and clothing items. The Appleton West High School counseling office received all donated items - distributing items to students in need.

A big thank you to our awesome ambassadors for their commitment to this project, as well as all the donors.

CREATION AND INNOVATION

**We are a platform
that sparks discovery,
development and
originality.**



SIDEWALK POETRY

The City of Appleton's Department of Public Works launched the Sidewalk Poetry Program in 2014. The idea, created by Saint Paul's City Artist-in-Residence Marcus Young, is to transform the city's sidewalks into an open poetry book. Select poetry is stamped throughout the city where sidewalk squares are due to be replaced.

Last year, we partnered with the Public Works Department as a first-time host of the Sidewalk Poetry Program. We encouraged community members to

submit their original poetry to our website. We assembled a team of seven community curators who reviewed each poem to curate a selection of styles and subject matter. The curated selection was available at the library for public input and final selection. The final selection included five poems. Poets were recognized at a City Council meeting, gifted with their stamp and invited to share their poem at a Poetry Unlocked session. With over 130 submissions, Appleton has a lot of poets to be proud of.



133

**Poems Submitted to
the Sidewalk Poetry
Program**

SMALL BUSINESS - BIG IMPACT COWORKING PROJECT

Over the past several years we have been exploring small business and entrepreneurship needs in our community. In 2020, we launched an initiative called Small Business – Big Impact. Small Business – Big Impact supports business startup, retention and expansion for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants and refugees.

As part of the initiative, we began offering services and programs designed to support entrepreneurs and small businesses. Additionally, we began bundling information to provide to community members interested in starting a new business or learning about how to expand or sustain their business.

Last year we saw an opportunity to continue exploring these services. We were a recipient of New North's Ethnic and Diverse Microgrant for non-profits. This grant helped to fund our Small Business – Big Impact Coworking project. The funding supported staff and program expenses for a series of mobile pop-up coworking experiences for small business owners and entrepreneurs, with specific focus on engaging BIPOC communities to address racial and ethnic disparities in business information access and networks of support.

This project supports our larger vision and plan for expanded business services that include a free, accessible, inclusive coworking space in our renovated library, by surveying and engaging with BIPOC business owners to understand what they want to see in the forthcoming space. Thank you to Friends of Appleton Public Library for serving as the fiscal agent for APL to receive this grant and enact this project.



“The support provided in starting my business was invaluable, offering resources, guidance, and a conducive environment for ideation. The coworking sessions enriched my financial knowledge, providing practical insights and strategies crucial for business success.”

- Mahima, Entrepreneur and Coworking Project Participant

ENGAGED AND CONNECTED

We focus on
how to make
a difference in
people's lives.



325+

Book Recommendations
Made Since 2020

“This is a fantastic service especially as new books are constantly issued each year. It saves me a tremendous amount of time attempting to research which books to read and offers me opportunities to read books I wouldn't have considered or found otherwise.”

- Book Matchmaker Participant

BOOK MATCHMAKER

We believe in connecting community members with the materials they're seeking to achieve their goals. Often, this happens in-person. In 2020, when the Safer at Home order was enacted, we brainstormed ways we could continue to connect our community with the materials they were seeking, while also providing a human connection. One of the services born from these needs was Book Matchmaker, our book recommendation service.

Book Matchmaker continues to be one of our popular services. It allows us to connect with our community and inspires them to continue reading by providing personalized recommendations. Since its inception, over 325 matches have been made.

LIBRARY INTERNSHIPS

We were proud to host three internships last year. Our interns experienced the work of librarianship first-hand and explored how to use their talents and perspectives to impact their communities.

Each of our interns had a different focus area. Brenda, our Children's Services intern, came to us as a library volunteer pursuing a Master of Library Information Science from Syracuse University. As an intern, she learned about curriculum and program planning and ran two school-age programs. She was also responsible for creating and implementing a self-directed activity.

Morgan, our teen intern, came to us from a Public Library Association Inclusive Internship Initiative. The initiative aimed to offer paid mentored internships in local public libraries to high-school age students from diverse backgrounds. During her time at APL, Morgan learned more about the library, as well as developed and managed a teen program. Her program, "It's in the Stars," offered teens the opportunity to learn about zodiac signs, create art, check out materials related to astrology and enjoy themed refreshments.

Amari, our Community Partnerships apprentice came to us from a Libraries in Bloom Northeast Wisconsin Library Apprenticeship Initiative. The initiative, which works to cultivate a diverse library workforce, exposes young adults who reflect the racial diversity of our communities to a career in libraries. At the time of her apprenticeship, Amari was a second-year student at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh studying Business Management. During her time with us, she designed and hosted a focus group, with the results enhancing our Small Business - Big Impact Initiative.

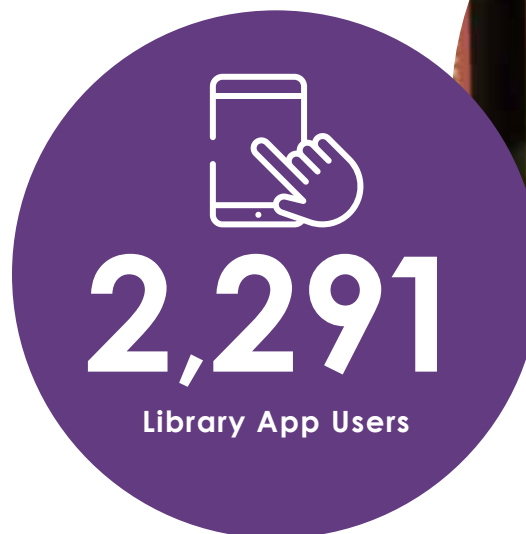


"My experience was amazing. I didn't realize how much business and libraries connected. I really felt like I was a big piece of the organization in a sense. I loved the creative control I had, and I really think that will help me down the line."

- Amari, Library Apprentice

ENRICHED EXPERIENCES

We provide
inclusive, timely,
and community
interest aligned
experiences.



LIBRARY APP

We are continually evaluating our communication channels to provide great customer experiences.

Last year, we had the opportunity to update our library app through our service provider. There were several improvement areas available for us to consider. One of the major improvements we made was creating a simple interface, focusing on what patrons use most frequently. Additional improvements included; a more browsable catalog, the ability to view checkout history, easier to use digital library cards, and easier to manage holds.

PLAYAWAYS

There is something for everyone in our collections. Last year we expanded our Playaway collection to include titles for adults and teens.

Playaways are audiobooks pre-loaded onto a small device. No internet or Wi-Fi is needed, just a pair of headphones to plug in. They're small and convenient, making them perfect for traveling.

In addition, Playaways can be used alone or paired with print to improve literacy, comprehension and retention. They create confidence in struggling readers of all ages.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR ALL

We give our community opportunities for growth, self-instruction and inquiry.



15

**New Spaces
in the Library**



LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECT

One of our largest and most exciting projects last year was the kickoff of construction for the new library. This project would not have come to fruition without the support of the community. We can't wait to open the doors to the new library next year.

It's been a winding road to get to where we are. During the last quarter of 2022, the bid opening for the library project revealed costs escalated beyond the project team's estimations. The team recommended the City of Appleton Common Council reject all bids. This would allow the team to rework the design and scope and rebid the project.



The team worked through major changes to the design during the first quarter of 2023. They came back with a modified design that continued to meet project objectives for accessibility, safety, sustainability, flexibility and connectivity.

Behind the scenes, Friends of Appleton Public Library began to cultivate private philanthropic support for the library. This was a huge task. They gathered a group of long-standing library supporters to form a library capital campaign committee. This committee spent many hours keeping potential donors informed of the project and the city's approach to delivering a cost-effective plan.

The project was rebid with a June 15 bid opening. The bids fit within the overall project budget and the City of Appleton Common Council approved the bids June 21.

On July 25, we had an amazing turnout for our groundbreaking event. Hundreds of community members celebrated this once-in-a-lifetime milestone with us, enduring the scorching heat. This was proof of how much our community supports and appreciates their library.

By August, construction was in full swing with demolition work taking up most of the fourth quarter.



355K

Pounds of
Metal Recycled

We had one more twist in our journey by the end of the year. The lease at our first temporary location was up and we needed to find another location to operate from. The developer of the site we were operating at graciously worked with the City of Appleton and the library project for several years. They were able to help connect us with the Thompson Center on Lourdes who were leasing a space for their future location. The Thompson Center kindly agreed to sublease their space to us so we could continue to provide critical library services to the community.



By November, Friends of Appleton Public Library kicked off the public phase of their Building Beyond Words capital campaign. This work is crucial to the success of this project. At the time of their public kickoff Friends and the capital campaign committee had already raised an incredible \$10.3 million of their \$12 million goal.

As part of the campaign kickoff, for a limited time, a matching donation was available to donors. Thanks to the generous support of Mary Beth Nienhaus, every donation was matched up to \$500,000.

We are so grateful for Friends of Appleton Public Library, the capital campaign committee and everyone who has continued to support the project. This project would not have happened without the community coming together. You are library champions. You're helping us fulfill our mission and vision. You're transforming the library into a building beyond words.



2023 Annual Report

3000 E. College Ave.
Appleton, WI 54915
920-832-6173
apl.org