

Friends Grant Program Summary

1st QUARTER 2026

Adult Classes and Events

Newspaper Basket Weaving

Artist Nik Shier guided program attendees through the novel art of basket weaving. By utilizing old newspapers and magazines, Nik showed how upcycling and reusing pedestrian materials can be reinvented into practical items. Attendees were given time to create, converse, and forge new connections with their fellow community members. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

10 Decades of Tea

Flavorful Tea Fruit Co. owner Heather Schroeder presented her fourth installment of tea and tea culture programming. Heather provided attendees with 10 different teas of significance from various decades, from the 1920's to the present. The program covered significant cultural and social events, how those events shaped tea culture, and how the significance of these teas helped to shape history itself. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Find Your Ancestors: Polish Genealogy – Finding Their Polish Records

The Find Your Ancestors series kicked off 2026 with a presentation by genealogy lecturer and author Steve Szabados on researching Polish genealogy. Steve outlined a step-by-step approach that emphasized understanding name variations, pinpointing an ancestor's exact birthplace, and using U.S. records to trace origins. Steve also shared key tools for mapping historical locations, locating and translating records, and using genealogy societies and online databases for further exploration. Attendees appreciated his clear presentation, detailed handout, and the wide range of resources provided. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Find Your Ancestors: What to Do with Your Personal Archives and Genealogy Research Materials

In February, archivist and genealogist Vicki Tobias gave a practical presentation on organizing, preserving, and sharing family research materials and heirlooms – both physical and digital. She guided attendees through evaluating their collections, creating storage and organization plans, understanding the basics of digitization, and making thoughtful decisions about what to keep, share, or let go. Participants praised the clear, manageable approach and left feeling equipped and motivated to tackle long-postponed projects. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

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Find Your Ancestors: Point of Origin – How to Find Your Ancestral Village

In March, professional genealogist and Certified Travel Associate Lisa Vogel presented strategies for identifying an ancestor's hometown before immigrating to the United States. Lisa highlighted key sources such as family stories, vital and church records, passenger lists, and naturalization documents. The presentation also addressed common challenges like name changes, spelling variations, and shifting geographic boundaries, while introducing helpful research tools and DNA strategies to help confirm ancestral origins. Several attendees said they left with new ideas and resources to continue their research. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Downtown Nature Walk

Each month patrons set out on a 90-minute, 3-mile smooth surface walk to explore the variety of flora and fauna found in Downtown Appleton. This program fosters appreciation and reverence for the world around us, creates opportunities for community building, and explores various methods for species identification. During winter our highlights included Red Cedars, Peregrine Falcons, and Lesser Scaups. Friends' funds were used to purchase binoculars.

Songwriters' Circle with 7000apart

FlipSide favorites 7000apart presented their welcoming and inspiring Songwriters' Circle for musicians and writers of all levels. Participants shared live performances and recorded samples for positive feedback and constructive critiques. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenters.

Sages Story Circle

Sages Story Circles are community spaces designed to connect, affirm, and empower women aged 60+. The sessions are offered twice a month. They provide a safe space to share stories of their lives, provide a creative outlet, and foster a deep sense of community among participants. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Artist-in-Residence

APL's Artist-in-Residence program provides a space for artists to showcase their work and engage patrons through programming opportunities. The program inspires and educates, fosters a connected community, and expands APL's role as a community resource.

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APL's first Artist-in-Residence of 2026 was Mauriah Donegan Kraker. Mauriah utilizes dance, movement, sport, storytelling, visual art, and somatic practices to build relationships intergenerationally and communally. Mauriah offered three workshops using movement to explore how to ground, care, and connect to participants physical selves. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter and to purchase supplies.

Kanopy Movie Matinees

Kanopy Movie Matinees are recurring film screenings that promote digital services and provide leisurely recreation. Providing free, publicly accessible movie screenings to community members promotes community connection by offering a shared experience for attendees and an avenue into the entertainment mainstream. Friends' funds are used to purchase popcorn for attendees.

Teas of Africa

Flavorful Tea Fruit Co. owner Heather Schroeder presented her fifth installment of tea and tea culture programming. Heather showcased teas native to the African continent, their significance in African culture, and how they became commercially available within the United States. Heather provided attendees with several samples of imported tea, along with sommelier-like tasting guidance. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Spanish Conversation Circle with Gonzalo

This eight-week Spanish Conversation Circle offers non-native Spanish Language learners a friendly, relaxed, and stress-free environment to practice pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Native speaker and host Gonzalo Valera guides the conversations, making gentle corrections and providing insights into the tradition and culture infused within the language. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Craft Nights for Adults!

Craft Nights for Adults! provides a welcoming and open environment for adults to gather and find creative expression through simple crafting. All crafts are easy to follow, offering space for participants to chat with one another or time for independent work. Participants shared this program offers an accessible opportunity for artistic creation and provides a comfortable space for socializing with new friends. Friends' funds provide program supplies.

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Writing with Consistency and Courage: A Creative Writing Workshop

Author Tamara Dean led participants through a creative writing workshop exploring what courage and consistency meant for their writing. Attendees learned several techniques for getting to and staying at the page, overcoming resistance, and tapping into and trusting their creative intuition. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Tammy Borden: Surviving Nazi Germany & The Power of Telling Your Story

On March 4, Tammy Borden presented her book *Waltrud: A True Story of Growing Up in Nazi Germany*, inspired by her mother's childhood memories. Tammy described her process of interviewing her mother, conducting additional historical research, and navigating the path to publication. She also highlighted the value of preserving personal and family stories and offered practical advice on capturing those memories for future generations. Attendees especially appreciated hearing a German perspective on the World War II era—an angle not often explored in literature. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Teen Classes and Events

Game ON! Teen Gaming

Each week, a team of dedicated volunteers creates a dynamic experience for young gamers to enjoy PlayStation 5, Nintendo Switch, and tabletop games. Public computers in the Thomas P. Fanning Teen Area are reserved to facilitate online gaming. This program has gained a solid following by a group of weekly attendees. Friends' funds were used to purchase gaming equipment, games, and refreshments.

Self-Care for Teens: Move Your Body to Quiet Your Mind

This interactive program was led by Janelle Jentz of Meta Body Care, where teens learned to calm their minds to relieve stress and anxiety. Teens practiced different movements and vocal sounds that can be used anywhere for self-care. Friends' funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter.

Teens Lead: Teen Ambassador Program (TAP)

Teens meet monthly during the school year for an exchange of program ideas, library updates, and community-based projects. Our members worked on various projects this quarter including a collaborative mural for Fox Cities Reads, summer teen program planning and crafts to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Friends' funds were used to purchase refreshments for our meetings.

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Teen Tuesday: Neon Art

Using acrylic paints on black canvas, teens designed simple images and learned the artistic technique for creating the illusion of making “neon” art. Finished designs included flowers, hearts, animals, and even the state flag of New Mexico! Friends’ funds were used to purchase canvases and painting supplies.

Teen Tuesday: Beaded Heart Hoop Earrings (Ladder Stitch) with Shelby Siebers

Shelby Siebers, member of the Oneida Nations and Student Success Advisor for Appleton Area School District, shared the cultural and spiritual significance of beading in Native tradition with teens, providing careful guidance in the creation of beaded heart hoop earrings using the ladder technique. Teens learned how the practice of beading can strengthen the mind and heart. Friends’ funds were used to provide an honorarium to the presenter and programming supplies.

Children’s Classes and Events

January-March Memorial Park StoryWalk®

Children’s Services used Friends’ funds to purchase two copies of the following books; *Wonder Walkers* by Micha Archer, *I Hear You*, *Forest* by Kallie George, and *This is Not My Lunchbox* by Jennifer Dupuis

Books were unassembled and then reassembled as StoryWalk® pages. The Appleton Parks & Recreation Department built and installed permanent sign holders along a trail at Memorial Park for the StoryWalk® pages to be displayed. Families who walk along the trail can read the story as they go. These titles are up for one month each. In addition to the story itself, each page has fun activities to engage families as they read and walk.

StoryWalk® was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT, in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, and is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.

Symphony Storytime

On February 21, Kenneth Johnson, Trombonist in the Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra, joined Miss Sonja for a musical morning. We read *Brass Instruments* by John Wood and *Orchestra Pit* by Johanna Wright. Children danced and listened to music by the trombonist and had fun moving and singing with scarves. Friends’ funds were used to provide an honorarium to the performer.

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Musical Moving Storytime

Each week, after moving to music and stories, children create musical instruments to take home and continue playing with sound. Friends' funds were used to purchase craft supplies.

STREAM Team

In February and March children ages 3-5 years old participated in hands-on activity stations related to the themes of winter, food, ocean, sky, Valentine's Day, Olympics, pirate, and colors. Friends' funds were used to purchase craft supplies.

Valentine's Hearts & Crafts

On February 13 and February 14 preschoolers enjoyed making heart crowns, wands, and valentines and playing with the sensory bin and playdoh. Friends' funds were used to purchase craft supplies.

Little Leprechauns

Children enjoyed a special crafting event, including rainbow face paint and playing in the sensory bin filled with rainbow rice and gold coins. Friends' funds were used to purchase craft supplies.

Messy Little Learners

Once a month, Little Learners play program turns into Messy Little Learners where children can explore fun and messy learning. Friends' funds were used to purchase supplies to create sensory play experiences.

KPop Movie Party

On January 8, the Children's Department was taken over by tiny KPop Demon Hunter fans at our KPop Movie Party. At this experience, kids got to dance, sing, experiment with chopsticks, learn to write, "Hello" in Korean, make ramen noodle bowl designs, fold origami envelopes, pose at our photo booth with props, and more. Friends' funds were used to purchase supplies.

Fairy Tale Program

After a retelling of the Three Little Pigs with puppets, families were invited to explore themes surrounding Fairy Tales in partnership with the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. Exploration included building bridges for the Billy Goats Gruff, making puppets to share stories, and using "straw", "sticks", and "bricks" to paint little pig houses. Friends' funds were used to purchase supplies.

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Pokémon Club: Special Edition

Over 100 attendees came together to share their love of Pokémon through game play, crafts and activities including a scavenger hunt. Slick Mimic's provided giveaways for attendees including stickers, posters and pencils. Leftover craft supplies and giveaways have been incorporated into the weekly Pokémon Club. Friends' funds were used to purchase supplies.

AASD Cultural Day

Edison Elementary school held a cultural day event where students learned about different countries around the world. Friend's funds were used to purchase little frogs from Puerto Rico to give to the students.

Early Reader Book Club

Early Reader Book Club designed for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade and celebrates a different beloved book series. Friends' Funds were used to purchase supplies for crafts.

March Book Madness

After filling out a bracket and reading 16 books, children were able to decide which book was their favorite of the month. Upon completing the program, children picked a prize and were entered into a grand prize drawing for various specialty balls or tickets to a Herd basketball game. Friends' funds were used to purchase prizes.

Ongoing Classes, Events and Services

Multicultural Book Club

Multicultural Book Club invites multilingual households to explore language-rich activities and discover practical strategies to support their children's learning. Through a blend of STEM, reading, math, and social-emotional learning, the club helps strengthen academic skills and literacy. Families also receive guidance on choosing age-appropriate books, enjoy guided library tours, and benefit from personalized reading recommendations. Friends' funds provide snacks, playing a vital role in keeping children energized and focused after school.

School-Age STEAM

Students in kindergarten through 6th grade participated in activities and experiments related to spiral art, winter animals, the human body, Valentine's Day, Winter Olympics,

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ice, flight, detective skills, germs, and more. They even used math and word play to solve a breakout room experience. Friends' Funds were used to purchase supplies.

Crafty Creators

Students in kindergarten through 6th grade tried crafts and activities related to winter holidays, night sky, animals, textures, fairy tales, and more. Friends' Funds were used to purchase supplies.

Special Projects

Constant Contact

We use Constant Contact to email our subscribers information about library news, classes, services, and more. Friends' funds pay for the subscription.

Library of the Year Celebration

Friends' funds paid for our staff and community Library of the Year celebration including; stickers, bookmarks, book bags, signage, and treats.

Staff Wellness Room

A staff committee improved the staff wellness room with furnishes and decorations to make it a cozy and inviting space for staff. Updates include a recliner, massage mat, weighted sensory ball, sound machine, light therapy and no blue light lamps, rug and a decorative wall feature. Friends' funds were used to furnish and decorate the room.

Stapelstein®

Stapelsteins are lightweight steppingstones that promote independent and group play, offering opportunities for balance and a wide variety of imaginative play. Friends' Funds were used to purchase an additional large Stapelstein for large motor play.

Tween Floor Items

Staff refreshed the tween area with items such as dominoes, a Rubik's Cube, and magnetic board. These play options encourage learning and connection on the children's floor. Friends' Funds were also used to purchase supplies.