

Yule-tide of Events

December will be busy with crafts, music and visits with Santa / Page 3

Once a Teacher ...

Retired college professor leading tai chi classes at Savannah Branch / Page 5

Cake Lady Hits Century Mark

Not her age! It's the number of recipes in the library newsletter / Page 8

New Library Update

With floor plan in hand, construction is set to begin in January

By Michelle Mears
Library Director

Looking back, I can't believe it has been two whole years since we began the design process for our new building. But we've made progress, and now it's time to share an update about this project.

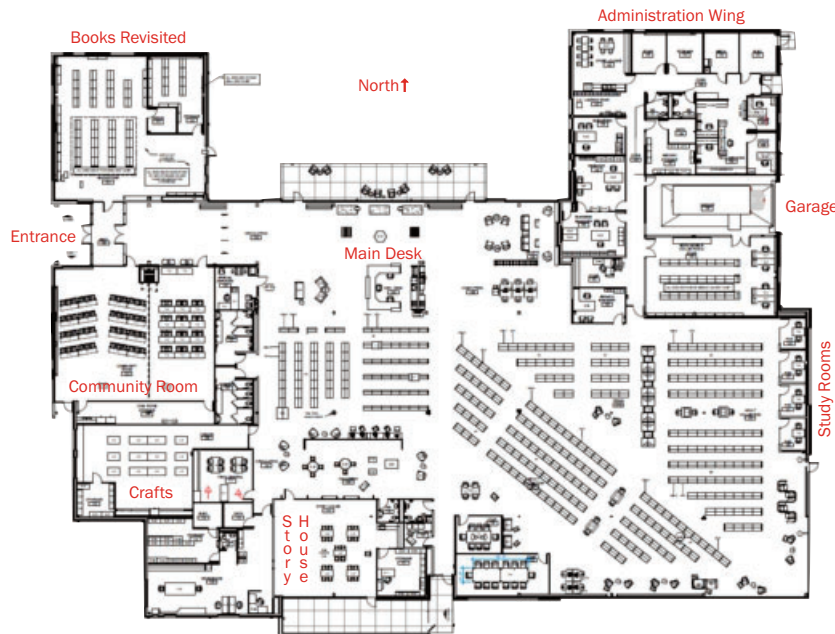
We've purchased a plot of land, a little under four acres, near the intersection of Faraon Street and Riverside Road, in the new development south of the Mosaic Life Care complex. The lot gives us enough room to build on with plenty of parking and outdoor spaces for programs, a drive-up window, and a walking path around a retaining pond for exercise and relaxation.

Our floor plan is set, and the layout includes space all on one level for the library branch, administrative offices, Bookmobile garage, and the Friends of the Library bookstore. The exterior is similar to the original renderings, but we had to make a few choices to keep costs down, so new images will be shared soon in addition to the ones in this newsletter.

Other features of our new space will include four pub-



In order to stay within budget, changes were made for the building's facade. Below is the floor plan for the building.



lic meeting rooms, four study rooms, a patio for outdoor programming, and a technology space for both one-on-one assistance and classes. Our interior theme is designed around bringing the outdoors inside, making a connection to nature and the world around us. There will be a play area for children focused on early literacy, and plenty of natural light throughout the building.

Our construction manager has put the project out for bid, and we are committing about 35% of the construction costs to local contractors. In some categories we did not receive any local bids, sometimes because the job was too big and sometimes because firms were too busy to include us in their schedules.

Construction is planned to begin in January 2025 and be completed by March 2026. While winter is not a good time for a groundbreaking ceremony, we will do something fun in the spring to celebrate the project. We will have a job-site

Continued on Page 8

Saving the World

Reading helps build empathy for others in a time it's needed

Those of us who read regularly, both for information and for enjoyment, have a sense that it has opened our eyes to the world in ways we can't always explain. It's hard to articulate how reading murder mysteries or celebrity biographies makes us better people, but it does. It puts us in the shoes of other people and helps us develop a greater understanding of life.

There isn't a great deal of research on this because it is not easily studied. Empathy in general is a fuzzy concept, the ability to feel what others are feeling and understand the way that they experience the world is not like riding a bicycle.

It doesn't just "click" one day and then you never fall down again. It has been shown that people who read stories, both fictional narratives and historical or biographical texts, tend to exhibit more empathy towards others and report that they feel transported into the story, that they are emotionally involved, and that they identify with the characters. The result is what they call a "sleeper effect," something that manifests over time without the conscious knowledge of the person experiencing it.

We are certainly in a time when we need to encourage people to have a greater understanding of each other. Unfortunately, people are moving away from spending extended time with narrative stories in favor of short reads and online videos of less than a minute. Reading comprehension was in decline long before the pandemic, but time out of school and a lack of support at home has made it worse.

So how do we get people, and especially kids, to be readers again? Parents need to understand they are their children's first teacher. They cannot wait until kindergarten to start. They should be sending kids to school with some basic pre-literacy skills and recognition of letters and numbers. Reading books aloud with children and letting them use devices for educational games (not mindless videos) helps build reading skills. And kids need to see adults reading to show reading is valued in your home.

Will reading save the world? It won't happen overnight, and we need to stay vigilant against the forces that want to stop people from reading or only let them read certain things. The solutions to the world's problems will always involve reading more and not less. Fighting bigotry, racism, and sexism is helped by experiencing stories from people of all races and genders. Help your kids develop the connections they need to the communities they live in by reading. It doesn't need to be award-winning literature. Fluency, comprehension, and understanding will grow no matter what you read as long as you read — and read a lot.

Michelle Mears, *Rolling Hills Library Director*

mmears@rhcl.org



Other ways to reach and follow us

Text the library at **816-287-9828** using these keywords, and we'll help with your account:

Status for account information **Renew all** to renew everything on your account

Renew due to renew overdue items **Help** for a list of available commands

or text anything else to start a conversation with a librarian.



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Browse

a quarterly publication from
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Rolling Hills Library

Rolling Hills Library

rhcl.org

Belt Branch

1904 N. Belt., St. Joseph
816-232-5479
HOURS: 9-8 Mon-Sat
12-6 Sun

Savannah Branch

514 W. Main, Savannah
816-324-4569
HOURS: 9-7 Mon-Fri
9-5 Sat/12-5 Sun

Business Office

1912 N. Belt, St. Joseph
816-236-2106

Bookmobile & Outreach

1912 N. Belt, St. Joseph
816-205-7100

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*The board generally meets
at 5 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday
of each month.*

Friends of the Library

The Friends support the library through
volunteer and fund-raising efforts.
The Friends board meets monthly.

Rolling Hills Library Foundation

The Foundation strives to provide
financial support for large
endeavors and future growth of the
library by seeking substantial gifts from
patrons and supportive foundations.



Magic the Gathering

Interested in learning this collectible trading card game? Or needing a group to play Magic with? First time players and veteran players are welcome. For ages 13+ and adults. 1-3 p.m. Saturdays, Dec. 7, Jan. 4 & Feb. 1, Savannah Branch

Music, crafts, visits with Santa and Christmas bingo for kids add up to a ...

Yule-tide of events

Adults and youths have several opportunities in December to create holiday crafts and meet Santa Claus in programs at the Belt and Savannah branches.

Painting Classes – A cute Christmas gnome is the theme of two painting classes in the first week of December at Belt. All supplies are provided. The all-ages class for families and kids begins at 5:30 p.m.



Monday, Dec. 2. Register for it at events.rhcl.org/event/11988482. The adult class is set for 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3. Register for it at events.rhcl.org/event/11966680.

Ukulele Christmas Workshop – If you know how to play at least three chords, join library uke teachers Hans and Jennifer to play Christmas tunes at 4-5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3, at Savannah. Bring your own instrument or use the library ukes that are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Giving Plates – At 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4, at Belt, teens and adults can create a festive plate for giving holiday goodies to others and which they can pass on, too. Plates and paint pens provided. Register at events.rhcl.org/event/12078410.

Milk and Cookies with Santa – Children and families can have their pictures taken with Santa and do crafts and enjoy snacks in the Belt Upper Story in two sessions.



Families of all sizes can have their picture taken with Santa on Friday, Dec. 6, and Saturday, Dec. 7, in the Belt Branch Upper Story. Pictures will be put on the library's Facebook page on Monday, Dec. 9.

Santa and Mrs. Claus will be there 2-4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6, and 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 7.

Sensory Sensitive Santa – Individuals who need a quieter setting to meet with Santa and Mrs. Claus can visit the Upper Story from 2-4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7.

Family Night with Santa – Kids of all ages can meet and have their pictures taken with Santa and do crafts and other activities 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10, at Savannah in this Andrew County Parents

as Teachers-sponsored event.

Christmas Music Bingo – Families and kids are invited to test their familiarity of holiday tunes in this fun event at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, at Belt. Can you recognize that tune in just a few bars?

Cheesecloth Christmas Trees – At 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, at Savannah, adults and older kids will make unique Christmas trees with cheesecloth. All materials provided. Register at events.rhcl.org/event/12123058.

Gingerbread Houses: Holiday STEAM Event – Younger kids can drop in to create a holiday house from 3-4:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19, at Savannah. All materials provided. Registration is not necessary.

Noon Year's Eve! – Families won't have to stay up late to ring in 2025 in this Savannah event that starts at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 31. Come play games, do crafts and take part in a special surprise at noon!



DIGITAL MAGAZINES

Our digital collection provides you with the magazines you want and some you've never read before, covering cooking to politics. They are all FREE for you to read at rhcl.org/digital-library.

Library Scenes

August - October 2024



Books Revisited manager Hans Bremer offers advice on how to hold the ukulele in a beginners class on Aug. 13 at the Savannah Branch.



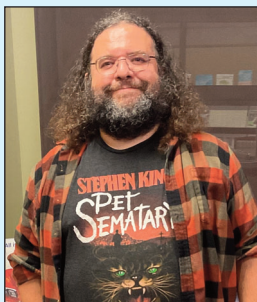
Miss R celebrates completing the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program at the Belt Branch in October.



The Savannah staff (including Ms. Janet and Ms. Paula above) surprised branch manager Jill with a fall bouquet on Boss's Day, Oct. 16.



One little audience member gets a closer look at the Joyce Raye Patterson Kitchen Band and their unique instruments during their concert on Oct. 29 in the Belt Upper Story.



Events featuring professors from the Missouri Western Pop Culture Club attracted good-sized crowds to the Belt in October. On Oct. 24, Dr. Michael Charlton (left) dissected author Stephen King's career of writing horror stories, while Drs. Evan Hart and Ed Taylor's event on Oct. 10 included a live session of their PhD Paranormal podcast.



There were 733 votes cast both online and in person at Belt from library users for the annual staff pumpkin decorating contest. The winners are: 1st place - Fancy Nancy by Melinda (far left); and a 2nd place tie: Mouse Cookie by Rochelle and Halloween Pikachu by Sheldon.



Teen Tech Take-Apart

Ever wonder what's inside a computer, phone or other electronics? Find out when you take apart tech items we provide using the tools we provide. You can make something out of the parts if you feel crafty, too. Register at events.rhcl.org/event/12048332. 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, Belt Branch

Health scare derailed his summer plans, but Savannah man is ready again to be a ...

Tai Chi Teacher

Once a teacher, always a teacher.

Al Garbagnati was a college psychology professor and hospital psychologist in Arizona before he and his wife, Susan, moved to Florida four years ago to care for a relative. Two years later, they decided to move closer to family in Kansas.

Their hunt for the right place to put down roots brought them to St. Joseph, which they found comfortable. A real estate agent suggested they might look at Savannah, too.

Savannah turned out to be just the place for them. And a place where he will be teaching weekly evening tai chi classes for the foreseeable future beginning at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4, at the Savannah Branch.

Garbagnati, who also teaches sitting tai chi at the Savannah Senior Center, was set to teach weekly at the library in June and July but had to cancel after two weeks when he needed heart surgery.

"I'm well and back on my feet and ready to rock and roll again," he declared.

Garbagnati has practiced martial arts for 52 years. Karate was his form for 25 years, until suffering a ruptured disc. He turned to tai chi and its easier methods.

The form of tai chi he practiced included 86 postures,



Al Garbagnati and Dr. Paul Lam at Lam's tai chi seminar in Kansas City in 2023.

that took about 15 minutes to work through. Learning and memorizing that many moves was challenging, but he mastered the method.

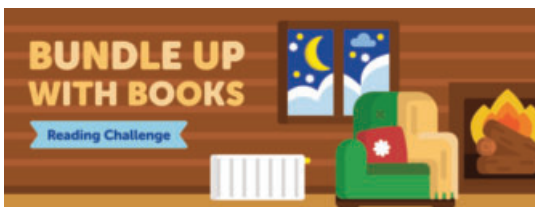
Four years ago, he learned about Tai Chi for Health, an Australian non-profit organization that promotes a compact version of tai chi with only eight postures for people with arthritis. The program was created by a physician who used tai chi to treat his own arthritis.

When Dr. Paul Lam came to Kansas City to present a two-day seminar a year ago, Garbagnati attended to learn more about Lam's arthritis tai chi. By the end, he had become a certified instructor.

"It's a very abbreviated form, but you really get the experience of tai chi," he said. "For people who aren't that athletic, this is great for them."

Tai Chi for Arthritis improves balance, flexibility, posture, strength and mobility. It also helps reduce blood pressure, stress, falls and fear of falling. Adults who don't have arthritis are also welcome to join Garbagnati's free classes, which last 50 minutes.

Young at Heart Resources, the not-for-profit service organization for seniors, is sponsoring the classes.



Cold weather doesn't stop readers from reading. They just put on more clothes and hunker down.

That's the idea behind the 2025 Winter Reading Program for adults that runs Jan. 1-Feb. 28. Participants who read four books win a pair of library gloves, a

free book and an invite to the annual adult reading parties in March.

Participants can record their books using the bingo cards available at the Belt and Savannah branches and the Bookmobile or online using the Beanstack reading challenge platform.



You're more creative than you think, and **Creativebug.com** provides hundreds of award-winning art & craft videos to help you on your way. Quilting, sewing, knitting, crochet, art and design, parties and more for you to explore at creativebug.com/lib/rhcl. Make an account and save videos to your own favorites list. Happy creating!





Mix It Up for Dry January

Amber Wilcox will explain the history, ingredients and health properties of non-alcoholic mixed drinks (aka mocktails) before mixing up a few for you to try in this adult program. Register at events.rhcl.org/event/12050653. 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, Belt Branch

Stay warm with this cozy romance ...

For fans of the television show **Gilmore Girls**, **The Pumpkin Spice Cafe** by author Laurie Gilmore might be the perfect book during cozy season.

In the small town of Dream Harbor, Jeanie is the new owner of the book's titular coffee shop, which is gifted to her by her aunt who is ready to retire. Jeanie is looking forward to a fresh start and is excited to take on this new opportunity after having an unfortunate experience at her previous job that left her shaken.

Logan is handsome and a local farmer, but he is also a bit of a grump, and he likes to stick to his

routine and not be bothered with town gossip. Yet, when the beautiful and mysterious Jeanie comes to town, he can't help but be intrigued by the new café owner.

Quicker than finishing a latte, Jeanie and Logan are the new talk of the town as everyone else can see the sparks fly between these two. However, there is something strange going on with the coffee shop, and, fortuitously, Logan is there to help her figure it out.

Are the strange noises in the night being caused by a disgruntled ghost? Is someone trying to sabotage the town's beloved café and Jeanie's dreams of a new start? And

is Logan willing to let go of his past heartbreak so he can find the true love he deserves?

This cute read (F Gilmore in the library catalog) has a hint of spice and a little bit of mystery thrown into its mix.

The first book in the Dream Harbor series, characters in this book have bigger roles in following books. In the **The Cinnamon Bun Book Store**, store owner Hazel is finding secret codes left in books. Local fisherman Noah helps her solve the mystery, growing closer to Hazel in the effort.

— Amanda McAsey, library assistant III



Book Reviews

... while this book grabs you by the throat

Chain-Gang All-Stars, a novel by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, was a nominee for best science fiction AND best debut novel in 2023. It follows a group of gladiators from a private prison system in an alternate America in which Hollywood has turned the prisoners into a must-see TV reality show for Criminal Action Penal Entertainment, or CAPE.

This dark and sometimes violent story is a compelling social commentary. It's a story about a flawed and skewed prison system and a lust for reality TV, the two going hand in

hand. For the gladiators, its kill or be killed. If one survives three years of killing for sport, they are freed from prison, known as "high freed." If they die fighting, that's "low freed." But they are still freed.

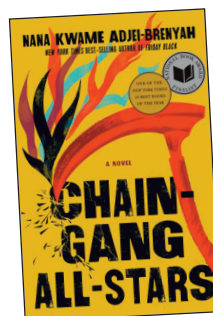
Cock fights, dog fights, prisoner fights, place your bet! The gladiators, known as Chain Gang "links," are turned into celebrities, with cameras pointed at them inside the ring and out. The public wants 24/7 entrapment.

You may question, are the enter-

tainment producers any better than the incarcerated, exploiting the imprisoned for the sake of entertainment, capitalizing on those who don't have a better choice?

This book (F Adjei-Brenyah in the library catalog) is so well written it drew me right in, got me completely invested and gut-punched over and over. This one will stick with me. I highly recommend this read.

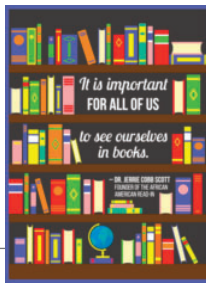
— Jennifer George, technical services manager



VetNow by Brainfuse

VetNow is an all-in-one suite of services designed for a range of veteran needs, whether it's updating a resume for civilian life, navigating the VA system, or seeking local resources for veterans and their families. Find VetNow under Research at rhcl.org/online-learning.

VetNow is made available by the Institute of Museum & Library Services and the Missouri State Library, a division of the Office of the Secretary of State



African-American Read In

Celebrate Black History Month in this sixth annual event for all ages and all people. Local readers will share works of African American literature including historical and contemporary pieces, poetry and children's literature. 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 23, Belt Branch Upper Story

New Large Print @ the Library

- Cold Threat by Nancy Mehl
- It Had to Be You by Mary Higgins Clark
- The Daybreakers by Louis L'Amour
- An Eye for an Eye by Jeffrey Archer
- A Healing Touch by Suzanne Woods Fisher
- Knife River by Justine Champine
- Evergreen Christmas by Janet Dailey
- Santa's Secret by Fern Michaels
- The Mistletoe Mystery by Nita Prose
- By Evening's Light by Leslie Gould
- Bad Liar by Tami Hoag
- One Big Happy Family by Susan Mallery
- We Solve Murders by Richard Osman
- Lies He Told Me by James Patterson
- How to Age Disgracefully by Clare Pooley
- Intermezzo by Sally Rooney
- That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America by Amanda Jane Jones
- The Hitchcock Hotel by Stephanie Wrobel
- Truth Be Told by Patricia Raybon
- A Song to Drown Rivers by Ann Liang
- Look on the Bright Side by Kristan Higgins
- End of Watch by Stephen King
- The Wedding Dress Sewing Circle by Jennifer Ryan
- Connie: A Memoir by Connie Chung
- Den of Iniquity by Judith A. Jance
- A Token of Love by Carrie Turansky

Belt program leads retired professor back to teaching

One thing led to another, and another, and maybe even more for Dr. John Pope on Oct. 16 at the Belt Branch, where he gave an evening talk about the natural history of north-west Missouri.

A retired geology professor from Northwest Missouri State University, Pope discussed how the rocks and land of the region were formed millions of years ago and the fossils that can be found there today. An audience of 26 people paid attention and had questions that showed their own interests in geology.

Some audience members brought fossils for Pope to examine and identify, and the conversations moved outside when the library had to close for the night.

One person in the audience belonged to the Association of Earth Science Clubs of Greater Kansas City. Two days after the Wednesday program, the club emailed and asked if Pope could speak at the group's meeting on Sunday

because their planned speaker had cancelled.

Pope gladly presented his program again. Afterwards, some members asked if they could meet with him for more geological information. They met the following Friday (Oct. 25) at the Savannah Branch, and Pope discussed sedimentology, which is how water settled and left marks on rocks over time. According to Wikipedia, sedimentary rocks cover up to 75% of the Earth's surface, record much of the Earth's history and harbor the fossil record.

But that's not the end of the story. Pope has been asked to speak to another Kansas City-area group in January or February and may give a talk at the Kansas City Gem and Mineral Show in March.

After earning his masters and doctoral degrees at the University of Iowa from 1996 to 2002, Pope taught geology for 21 years at Northwest Missouri and managed the school's Geoscience Museum.



Dr. John Pope explains the type of fossil specimen he brought to his talk Oct. 16 at the Belt Branch.



Books Revisited
The Friends of the Library Bookstore

Offering used and rare books, music and more!
1906B N. Belt 816-205-7125
12-5 Monday, 9-5 Tuesday-Friday & 9-6 Saturday

Barb Dalrymple is The Cake Lady

Pumpkin Spice Heath Bar Cake

Cake ingredients

½ cup sugar
⅓ cup cooking oil
⅓ cup sour cream
¾ cup whole milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
4 eggs
1 15-oz. can pumpkin
1 15-oz. or larger spice cake mix
1 8-ounce bag Heath Bits (I used about ¾ of the bag instead of the whole bag)

Frosting ingredients

1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
¼ cup butter, softened
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice (I left this out because some people don't like a lot of spice)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups powdered sugar
1 8-ounce bag Heath Bits (I used half of the bits instead of the full bag)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and spray 9x13-inch pan with cooking spray.

Combine cake mix, sugar, oil, sour cream, milk, vanilla, pumpkin pie spice, eggs and pumpkin in a large bowl; beat on medium speed with an electric hand mixer for 2 minutes.

Stir in one bag of Heath Bits then spread batter into prepared pan.

Bake cake for 30 to 33 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool completely.

To prepare frosting, beat cream cheese and butter on medium speed with an electric mixer until smooth. Beat in pumpkin pie spice and vanilla then gradually add powdered sugar, beating on low speed until smooth and creamy. Spread the frosting over the cooled cake, and garnish with Heath Bits.

Enjoy!



Barb is a Rolling Hills Library retiree who has made cakes for her friends and former co-workers for decades. This is her 100th recipe in the library newsletter since beginning back in 2011.

Online camera will show work at new building site

From Page 1

camera so we can watch online the building growing from afar, and our 2025 Summer Reading Program theme will include building and construction components to keep us connected to the project.

We plan to keep the Belt Branch open as long as we can, reopening in the new building once the collection and staff are moved. It seems like this project has taken longer than expected, but we are right on track and look forward to serving you in our new spaces. Follow our progress as construction begins at rhcl.org/building-project.

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of the Library!**

**Information
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rhcl.org/friends**