



# 2024 Annual Report

Prepared by
Amy McDonald
Executive Director

# A LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



Dear Community Members,

It is with great pride and gratitude that we present the Annual Report for the Western Allegheny Community Library (WACL) for 2024. Within these pages, you will find highlights of the impactful programs, services, and initiatives that continue to make WACL a vital resource in our community. The Board remains dedicated to our mission of providing a safe, inclusive, and accessible library that empowers personal, educational, and professional growth through our extensive collection and engaging programs.

This past year, WACL has continued to evolve to meet the changing needs of our patrons. We have introduced new services, expanded our programming, and strengthened community partnerships to ensure that we remain a cornerstone of lifelong learning and connection.

With over 75,139 annual visitors and over 14,000 attendees at our events, it is clear that

our library is more than just a building—it is a dynamic hub of knowledge, engagement, and community connections.

None of this would be possible without the steadfast support of our generous donors, local businesses, government agencies, and dedicated volunteers. Your belief in the mission of WACL allows us to innovate, grow, and serve as an essential resource for all. We recognize that you have many choices in how you invest in your community, and we are honored that you continue to choose to support the library.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to ensuring that WACL continues to thrive as a place where everyone is welcome, learning is encouraged, and community connections are strengthened. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.

Kay & Dodetalo

Kay Doddato Board President

## WHO WE ARE

Western Allegheny Community Library, an integral part of the Allegheny County Library Association, proudly serves the communities of Findlay Township, North Fayette Township, and Oakdale Borough. With a team of eighteen dedicated employees, we cater to over 24,000 residents, providing a diverse array of programs and resources, all accessible to our community members free of charge.



#### **MISSION**

The mission of Western Allegheny
Community Library is to provide a safe,
inclusive, and accessible communitycentered library that is free to the public and
empowers its residents' personal,
educational, and professional growth
through our collection, programs, and
services.

#### **VALUES**

- Community Partnership
- Equity and Inclusion
- Excellence and Integrity
- Intellectual Freedom
- Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- Respect

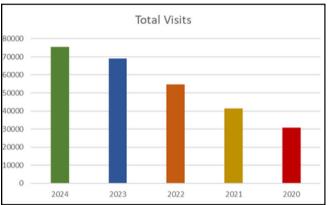


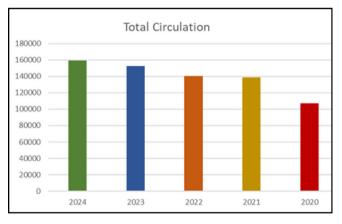
# CIRCULATION & USAGE STATISTICS

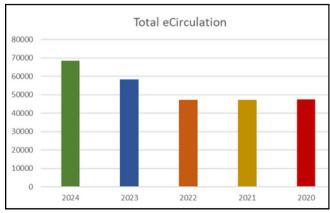
The Western Allegheny Community
Library continues to be a vital resource,
connecting patrons with a robust
collection of physical and digital
materials. Our community actively
engages with library resources, borrowing
hundreds of thousands of items and
participating in a wide range of programs.
From early literacy to lifelong learning,
our offerings support individuals of all
ages and interests. The following statistics
highlight the library's impact over the
past year:

- 13,756 registered users
- 33,753 physical items in our library's collection
- 232,366 items in the electronic collection
- 226,934 total items circulated in 2024, including:
  - 158,634 physical items
  - 68,300 electronic items
  - 85,251 children's items
  - 35,784 items loaned to other libraries
- 713 programs offered, including:
  - 363 for preschool-aged children (birth age 5)
  - 109 for school-aged children (ages 6–11)
  - 30 for young adults (ages 12-17)
  - 168 for adults (ages 18+)
  - 43 general interest programs (open to all ages)









# ADULT PROGRAMING

The library offers a dynamic array of programs designed to educate, inspire, and connect adults in our community. Whether through book clubs, hands-on workshops, wellness sessions, or lifelong learning opportunities, there is something for everyone. These programs provide a welcoming space for personal growth, social engagement, and skill-building, ensuring that patrons can explore new interests, expand their knowledge, and build meaningful connections.

This year, the library hosted 168 adult programs, with 1,811 residents participating in diverse topics and experiences. Financial literacy remained a key focus, with 11 programs helping patrons make informed decisions about budgeting, investing, and retirement planning. Health and wellness were also prioritized, with 19 programs dedicated to mindfulness, nutrition, and fitness. Additionally, we introduced seven STEM-focused programs, offering interactive

opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering, and math.

Beyond these core topics, the library provided a wide range of programs to enrich the lives of our patrons. Creative workshops in arts and writing fostered self-expression, while technology classes helped users navigate the digital world with confidence. History and genealogy programs deepened connections to local heritage, and cultural events like movie screenings and trivia nights brought the community together. Career-focused workshops supported job seekers and professionals, while civic engagement discussions encouraged thoughtful conversations on important issues. Through these diverse offerings, the library remained a vital hub for lifelong learning, creativity, and community engagement.



# YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAMMING

WACL is committed to providing engaging, educational, and enriching programs for children and teens of all ages. From early literacy initiatives and hands-on STEM activities to creative arts workshops and interactive storytimes, our programs foster a love of learning and discovery. Whether young patrons are exploring new interests, developing critical skills, or simply having fun, the library offers a welcoming space where they can grow, connect, and thrive.

This year, the library hosted 545 programs tailored to youth, including 363 for preschoolaged children (birth to age 5), 109 for school-aged children (ages 6-11), and 30 for young adults (ages 12-17). These programs provided invaluable opportunities for early literacy development, academic enrichment, and social engagement. Many focused on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math), helping young learners build curiosity and problem-solving skills in a fun and interactive environment. Storytimes, creative arts sessions, and hands-on experiments encouraged both self-expression and foundational learning.

In addition to traditional programming, the library offered unique experiences to engage young patrons in new and meaningful ways. Literacy-based initiatives supported emerging readers, while coding and robotics workshops introduced students to essential 21stcentury skills. Special events, including themed celebrations and summer reading challenges, motivated children and teens to stay engaged with books and learning year-round. By providing a diverse range of programs, the library played a vital role in supporting the educational and developmental needs of the community's youngest learners.









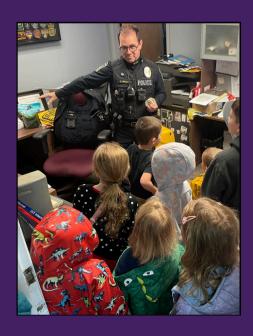
## **OUTREACH**

WACL is also committed to bringing resources, literacy, and engagement beyond our walls and into the community through dynamic outreach programs. Each month, our Book Bus makes 16 stops at area preschools and daycares, delivering books, stories, and activities that spark a love of reading in young learners. Through our partnership with LifeSpan - Imperial, we proudly support seniors by offering technology assistance, informational programs, and meaningful opportunities for connection.

Our outreach efforts extend even further, with library-hosted programs at locations like Hope Grows, Raccoon Creek, and the Botanical Gardens, ensuring that learning and engagement happen wherever our community gathers. The Book Bus also plays an active role in community events, participating in the Findlay Parade and



making regular appearances at Family Nights hosted by the school district. Families can also enjoy our interactive Story Strolls, where pages of a children's book are displayed along a scenic path, transforming a simple walk into a literacy adventure. These unique experiences promote outdoor exploration while encouraging a love of reading. Through these diverse outreach initiatives, the library continues to enrich lives and strengthen community connections.









# ACCESS, SERVICES & RESOURCES

The library is dedicated to providing access to essential services and resources that ensure accessibility, convenience, and support for our community. Whether through technology assistance, notary services, public computer access, or specialized programs, we strive to meet the diverse needs of our patrons.

This year, the library facilitated 45 one-on-one tech appointments, helping individuals navigate digital tools, devices, and online resources with confidence. We also provided 54 notary appointments, offering a vital service for those needing official document verification. With seven public computers available, patrons completed 3,034 computer sessions, accessing everything from job applications to research materials. Our free public Wi-Fi, which extends

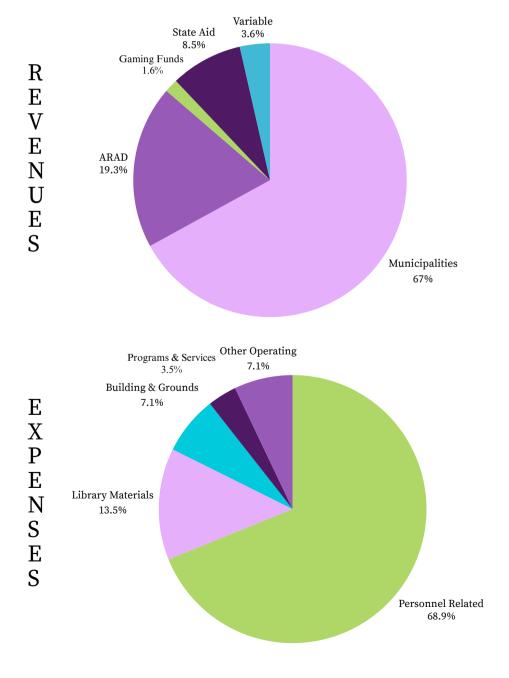
into the parking lot, was accessed 7,867 times, ensuring seamless connectivity for those who need it, when they need it. Additionally, the library continues to offer mobile printing, faxing, and scanning, making it easier than ever for patrons to complete essential tasks efficiently.

From January through April, the VITA Tax Program successfully served 1,215 people, providing vital tax assistance at no cost to residents. The library also participated in RAD Pass 2.0, a program that grants Allegheny County residents access to free and reduced-price tickets to partner cultural organizations. Through these services and initiatives, the library remains committed to enhancing accessibility, supporting lifelong learning, and enriching the community.

2024 Overview

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of Findlay Township, North Fayette Township, Oakdale Borough, the Allegheny Regional Asset District, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as well as our donors, grantors, and community partners. Their contributions allow us to expand services and provide valuable resources. Through their generosity, we are able to make a lasting impact on the community.





#### **FUNDRAISING**

In 2024, we raised an impressive \$155,869 through appeal letters, signature events, and campaigns, funds that directly support our mission to provide valuable resources and services to the community. Fundraising highlights include:

- Love Your Library Campaign & Fall for Your Library Event: In September, our Love Your Library campaign saw outstanding success, largely driven by our signature fundraising event, Fall For Your Library. With over 300 attendees, the event raised \$71,120, contributing to the campaign's total of \$93,000 from 189 donors, including 16 first-time contributors. Thanks to overwhelming community support, \$60,000 of these funds qualified for the county's match program, further amplifying their impact. We also received \$12,335 from the Jack Buncher Foundation and a \$5,000 year-end gift, both of which played a crucial role in advancing our mission.
- GBU Life Grant: This year, we were awarded a \$10,000 grant from GBU Life, which has been instrumental in enhancing our programs and services.
- Friends of the Library Success:
  Our dedicated Friends of the
  Library group had a recordbreaking year, raising over \$15,000
  through two seasonal book sales
  and an ongoing sale in the library.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **Building and Grounds**

- Installed a highly visible sign at the driveway entrance, improving accessibility and visibility for residents to locate the library.
- Officially opened the first Sensory Room in an Allegheny County Library, enhancing inclusivity for patrons with sensory needs.
- Enhanced security by installing 26 internal and external cameras, three panic buttons, and a keyless access door control, ensuring a safer environment for staff and patrons.
- Completed a comprehensive pavement project, including grading, repaving, expanded parking, and new guardrails along the hillside for improved safety and accessibility.
- Reorganized and repackaged the Library of Things collection, making it easier for patrons to browse and discover available items.
- Replaced magazine shelving to improve accessibility and visual appeal, enhancing usability for patrons.

#### Staff

- Amy received the Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce's Ambassador of the Year award, recognizing her exceptional community engagement and leadership.
- Amy was re-appointed to the Pittsburgh Shared Services Oversight Committee and named co-chair of the Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce's Ambassador Committee.
- The Leadership Team completed a six-week Leadership Communication course.
- Amy served as a panelist for the county's Politics, Policies, and Patrons Continuing Education event, sharing expertise with other library professionals.
- Becky was appointed Assistant Director, strengthening the library's leadership team.
- Heather was named co-chair of the Downloadable Resources Committee (beginning in 2025), expanding the library's role in digital resource management.
- Renewed PA Forward Gold Star Library status, reaffirming WACL's commitment to top-tier library services and resources.

#### Technology

- Upgraded all patron and staff computers through a generous grant from the Regional Asset District, improving technology access and efficiency.
- Implemented a new online events calendar to track and analyze user engagement, providing valuable insights into library service usage.
- Launched KnowBe4 Cybersecurity Training for staff, strengthening the library's digital security practices.
- Upgraded the library's wireless access points through a grant from the Hillman Family Foundation, enhancing connectivity for patrons.
- Added two new databases:
  - Blue Career Focuses on skilled trades, career assessments, salary ranges, and job-seeking support.
  - Financial Fit Offers tutorials on financial literacy, budgeting, credit scores, retirement planning, and more.

#### Outreach and Community Partnerships

- Collaborated with West Allegheny School District to support their Summer Reading Program and brought the Book Bus to all elementary school Kindergarten/New Student Orientation events.
- Partnered with the Pittsburgh Botanical Gardens, providing professional storytime and bringing the library bus to their summer programming.
- Established a partnership with Progress City, funded by the Department of Labor and Industry, to provide 90 hours of employment at WACL for two young adults, promoting community integration for diversely abled individuals.
- Heather presented at Findlay's October Senior Luncheon, showcasing library resources.
- North Fayette, Findlay, and Oakdale passed resolutions proclaiming Friends of the Library Week, recognizing the invaluable contributions of Friends groups in their townships.

# STRATEGIC PLANNING & OPERATIONS

In 2024, the Board of Directors played a pivotal role in guiding the library's strategic direction, ensuring its continued growth and sustainability. Through thoughtful planning and key partnerships, the Board focused on leadership development, operational efficiency, and policy improvements to enhance the library's long-term success. Their dedication to governance and innovation has positioned the library for continued excellence in serving the community.

- Initiated a partnership with Strategy Solutions to develop a Director Succession Plan, ensuring seamless leadership transitions and sustained strategic growth.
- Contracted with Insperity, a professional employer organization, to streamline and enhance HR functions for the library.
- Reviewed and updated all library policies, ensuring every policy has been revised within the past two years.
- Participated in the PALA and CBL Friends and Director's Institute, fostering professional development and collaboration.

2025

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### **DONORS**



The library is a gateway to knowledge, connection, and opportunity for our community. None of this would be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Your contributions fuel our mission, ensuring that we can continue providing essential resources, educational programs, and meaningful experiences for all.

We are proud to recognize the following financial donors for their outstanding generosity and steadfast support throughout 2024. Your commitment makes a lasting impact, and we are truly grateful.

#### \$10.000+ Donors

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