

PRESS RELEASE

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Cumberland County Library System Celebrates National Library Outreach Day, April 7, 2021

County's STAR Program Serves Homebound Senior Residents with Reading Materials through Volunteers

Mechanicsburg, PA – The Cumberland County Library System joins communities from across the country in observing National Library Outreach Day on April 7. Libraries will celebrate the invaluable role library professionals, library volunteers, and libraries play in bringing library services to those in need.

One of the Cumberland County Library System programs reaching those most in need is STAR – Service to Adult Readers. With trained volunteers, STAR provides the county's most isolated residents with large-print books, e-readers, and other library materials selected for them according to their reading preferences – and also, as COVID restrictions allow, provides those patrons with an in-person visit from their STAR volunteer, to deliver fresh reading materials and pick up items to return.

"As the most volunteer-intensive program we offer, STAR exemplifies the invaluable role our libraries play in bringing services to those in need," said Executive Director Carolyn Blatchley.

STAR provides services to homebound, mostly senior residents of Cumberland County in two ways. The first is by partnering the homebound resident with a trained volunteer who visits the patron to discern reading likes and then visits every 4-6 weeks to deliver new reading materials and collect items already read to be returned to the library. The second is Mini-Libraries, the providing (and regular updating) of large-print reading materials in the community rooms of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and senior apartments and day centers throughout the county. Both of these programs are led by the Library System's Adult Outreach Services Coordinator, and were established in 1987.

In 2019, 70 trained STAR volunteers provided services to 89 clients, delivering 5,392 items (mostly large-print books but also some audiobooks and DVDs). The 23 mini-libraries located across the county share the Library System's print books. Currently, due to COVID, many in-person visits are on hold, but the coordinator is maintaining phone contact with patrons and volunteers until activities can resume. In addition to providing reading materials that keep homebound seniors engaged with the regular contact with volunteers and the program coordinator helps stave off the loneliness of those living in isolation.

Celebrated annually during National Library Week, National Library Outreach Day is a national observance sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA), the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS), and the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL). It is a time for highlighting outreach services and for library advocates to make their support known—through thanking library staff, writing a letter or e-mail to their libraries, or voicing their support to community leaders.

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The Cumberland County Library System consists of seven federated local libraries, one branch facility, a system headquarters office, and an associated non-profit Foundation. The Library System provides support to its member libraries through information technology, securing library materials, older adult services, training opportunities, and administrative and financial services. More information on the Cumberland County Library System can be found at www.cumberlandcountylibraries.org.