



Becoming a Trusted Community Center

ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2022


HIGHWOOD
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



Pictured: The library's Teen Advisory Board (TAB)

Table of Contents

03	Letter from the Director	07	By the Numbers
04	Four Pillars	08	Friends of the Library
05	Highlights and Initiatives	09	Board of Trustees
06	The Digital Divide	10	Contact Information

A Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Throughout the past year, the library has focused on assessing and responding to the structural barriers that prevent individuals and families from receiving the resources they need to thrive. Listening to community members' needs and responding with programs that address those needs has positioned the library as a trusted community center that provides relevant and life-changing programs and services.

The library's services and programs are driven by the community's needs and requests for programming. The library intentionally engages community voices at multiple levels, using community input to drive program development and implementation. The library's Board of Trustees is 100 percent comprised of individuals from the local community, including individuals with a lived experience of marginalization. Our Teen Advisory Board, made up of local community youth, provides direct input to create and implement programming that reflects the community's wishes. Our Promotoras de Salud (Community Health Workers) are members of the local community who plan and carry out programming and engage with community members to understand and respond to shifts in community needs. This grassroots community engagement strategy allows us to offer community members relevant programming and resources to directly address their needs.

Focusing on community members' expressed needs has resulted in significant growth of programs and services. Our programs increase literacy, provide access to education, employment, and health services, and combat the digital divide. New programs, like our Workforce Development and Health Equity programs, are equalizing access and empowering individuals to pursue and achieve their ultimate goals.

Funded by grant revenue, the size of our team grew significantly. We have grown from one full-time to 12 full-time and 3 part-time staff members. Hiring and retaining qualified and compassionate staff is critical to sustaining our impact as an organization. That is why, in partnership with the Friends of the Highwood Public Library, we have launched a Capital Campaign for Impact and Sustainability to ensure that the momentum of the last several years can continue for generations to come.

This year, the library is expanding its mission to become Highwood's first community center. Our priority is to establish the library as a social asset that promotes a healthy and interconnected community inclusive of everyone. We strive to engage and uplift community voices to build a better Highwood for our future.

Sincerely,

Carmen Patlan

Executive Director, Highwood Public Library and Community Center



“The library intentionally engages community voices at multiple levels, using community input to drive program development and implementation.”



FOUR PILLARS OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Our library is now constructed of four focused service areas. This structure allows us to target the needs of our diverse community to provide life-changing services and programs strategically designed for all ages and abilities.



Library Services

- 235 Spanish language books were added to the collection to create a culturally responsive and accessible collection.
- Knowledgeable, compassionate, bilingual library professionals facilitated over 11,000 reference transactions.



Children's and Teen Services

- Over 600 hours of free academic support from trained and highly qualified Learning Partners was provided to students.
- 23 middle and high school members of our thriving Teen Advisory Board developed programming for their peers and gained valuable leadership skills.



Adult Literacy and Workforce Development

- 3 levels of ESL, Spanish language education, digital literacy, and GED classes are available for learners to expand their language speaking abilities and develop marketable skills for the workforce.
- Adult Spanish language test prep materials and books for reading comprehension and group discussion were added to the collection to supplement our GED and advanced Spanish conversation and literacy programs.



Health Equity

- 30 Facebook Lives in Spanish focusing on health-related topics and programming opportunities reached nearly 20,000 people.
- Over 2,000 vaccinations were provided to community members.

Highlights and Initiatives

Expanding to meet the needs of the Community



Creating a Sustainable Workforce

Our new Listo ("Ready") program provides employment skills, digital skills, soft skills readiness, and adult basic education to help individuals gain higher levels of employment and economic security. Program participants can join classes that are most relevant to their needs, meet one-on-one with our team members to receive career planning, and receive ongoing tech and digital readiness support on a drop-in basis.

Engaging the Community via Social Media

The library increased its Facebook page reach by almost 50 percent and its Instagram reach by over 250 percent. The overall engagement rate increased by over 200% as compared to the previous year.

Facebook Live video engagement increased 629% from 2020 with over 27,000 minutes viewed, an 855% increase from 2020. These Facebook Lives reached 19,506 people, and performed better than any other social media content the library presented.

Decreasing COVID Spread

Our culturally relevant community engagement strategy has led to a decrease in COVID spread and high numbers of individuals vaccinated in Highwood. As of June 2022, more than 85 percent of Highwood residents have received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccination, higher than Lake County's vaccination rate of 77 percent.

Our partnerships with Walgreens Co. and Rosalind Franklin University Health Clinics allowed us to provide 2,125 vaccinations to a community in need.

Promoting Health Equity

The Highwood Public Library and Community Center is committed to ensuring that the community can access health education and resources. Our new Health Equity Program provides preventative health and mental health education, case management, and counseling to marginalized community members and families of color.

Reducing the Digital Divide

The Internet is for Everyone

Many families in our community do not have the means to pay for Internet access. To address this need, the library has provided increased access to wireless service for our patrons both inside and outside the library. Funding from the Illinois State Library allowed the library to install two external access points, greatly expanding Internet coverage in the library's parking lot and into Evert's Park because many families need internet access beyond the library's hours of operation.

The consumer usage has far exceeded our projections, with the exterior wireless access delivering over 50 percent of the total wireless service provided to our community.

Connecting from Anywhere

The library now lends out hotspots, wireless access points that allow community members to connect phones, tablets, computers, and other devices to the Internet. This service has allowed local families who cannot afford Internet access to have the Internet access their families need for homework, job searches, and much more.

Come In or Log On

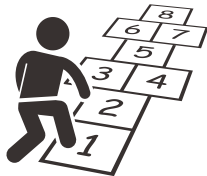
The pivot to virtual programming at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of remote program participation. Now many of our programs are hybrid, providing a variety of opportunities for individuals and families to attend programs at their convenience. This includes engaging patrons even as they travel abroad. For example, one Homework Help participant was able to continue receiving uninterrupted academic support during a trip home to visit family in Mexico.



By the Numbers

35,837

Total number of visits

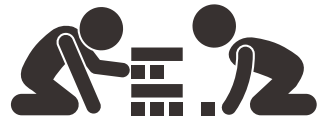


4,055

Children's program attendees

2,463

Teen program attendees



10,359

Adult program attendees

12,508

Physical material checkouts



1,362

Digital checkouts

2,700 / 131,924

Computer uses and minutes logged on



1,235

Active library card holders

Friends of the Library



Campaign for Impact and Sustainability

The Library recently completed a \$2 million capital Campaign for Literacy and Transformation, successfully securing the funding required to transform our facility into a 21st Century Library and Community Center.

With the support of so many friends in our community, the library is able to carry out the brick-and-mortar renovation that has been long overdue.

It is now necessary to focus on long-term sustainability in order to strengthen our capacity to deliver quality services and programs for years to come. The Friends of the Highwood Public Library is excited to launch a \$1 million Impact and Sustainability Campaign to sustain expanded programming and operations. Please consider supporting this campaign so that the library may continue to cultivate the potential for literacy that exists in us all.

Learn more on the Friends' website:

<https://www.friendshighwoodlibrary.org/sustainability-campaign>





Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees generally meets at 7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month. Meetings are open to the public.

Lucy Hospodarsky, President
Janell Cleland, Vice-President
Nora Loreda, Treasurer
Catherine Regalado, Secretary

Bertha Chavez
Diana Guerrero
Jason Muelver
Lorena Victorica

Contact our Board:

highwoodlibraryboard@gmail.com



Questions? Contact us:

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