



Library Advisory Board Meeting Thursday, February 16, 2023 In-Person @ Iroquois Branch Library

Groves
Rosenthal
Pearson

Murphy
Tempestini
Knuth

Boam
Conway
Aoh

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2023**
3. **Library Reports**
 - a. Report of the Director
 - b. Review of Financial Report- Deana
 - c. Statistical and Other Reports- Sheryl
 - d. Report of District Consultant
4. **Board and Committee Reports**
 - a. Report of County Council Liaison
 - b. Report of Friends of the Library
 - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation
5. **Unfinished Business-**
6. **New Business**
 - a. Staff Report- Jessica Stefano
7. **Adjournment**
8. **Appendix**
 - a. Announcements-
 - b. News Articles

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New Board Member Introduction – Adam Groves

Connections-

Career Online High School – Erie County Public Library now offers an online program through which adults can complete their high school diploma. ECPL is the first library in Pennsylvania to offer this program! Career Online High School is a private accredited online school district and allows adults to complete their high school studies online and at their own pace (within some time limits). The electives have a career focus to ready adults for their chosen professions, such as security professional, childcare, retail, food service, office management, etc. The Friends of the Library have agreed to sponsor three seats in the program. Millcreek Branch Manager, John Euliano is overseeing the application process. You can learn more about the general program at shcoe.org.

Erie Food System Summit – Karen attended the Erie Food System Summit at Penn West Edinboro University on Tuesday, January 24. The Erie Food Policy Advisory Council and the Erie County Department of Health organized the summit. Their goal was to gather partners across Erie County to streamline efforts in identifying barriers facing our system and how to work towards finding solutions. Karen attended to learn how the library may be able to facilitate collaborate efforts in addressing the food insecurities in Erie County.

UPMC Grant for Summer Reading Challenge – UPMC for Life/UPMC Hamot approached the Library about potential partnership/sponsorship opportunities. The Library proposed options that focus on our largest reading campaign, the Summer Reading Challenge. UPMC agreed to become a partner sponsor for the 2023 summer challenge. This sponsorship includes:

- \$4,000 financial donation to expand our registration incentive—a brand new book for every child ages 0-12 to kick-off their reading journey
- Branded, reusable bags to contain registration materials and transport library materials.

The in-kind bag donation is a wonderful boon as it typically wastes a large portion of our summer reading budget—provided by Friends of the Library. The financial donation allows us to double the impact and expand the age range of children who will receive a book of their own to keep. We are greatly excited for this partnership and look forward to even more ways to work with UPMC in the future.

Thanks to Kyle Shoulders for making the introduction to Katie Bool, member of the Wellness Committee.

Friends of the Library Book Sale – The Friends of the Library are hosting “A Sweetheart of a Sale,” February 9 thru February 11 in the Blasco Admiral Room. All proceeds benefit program funding for the Erie County Public Library.

Teen Reading Lounge Grant – The PA Humanities Council has awarded the Erie County Public Library with a \$3,000 grant to facilitate the Teen Reading Lounge (TRL). This is the fourth year the Library has been awarded this grant.

WQLN Broadcast from Blasco – Brain Hannah, host of “Classics with Brian Hannah,” is planning to broadcast his show live outside of the Blasco Library the week of June 12. There will be opportunities to promote library

programming for Youth, Adult and Outreach Services. The event is in the preliminary stage. More information will be shared as it is announced.

Collections-

Trial Database – We have a new database available called African-American History. The link is available on our database page and we have access until March 3.

<https://online.infobaselearning.com/Direct.aspx?aid=96109&pid=WE01>

Capacity-

Library Advisory Board Updates – Council approved two reappointments and one new member to the Library Advisory Board in January. Quyen Aoh was reappointed for District 7 and Kara Murphy was reappointed as an “at large” member by County Executive. Adam Groves was appointed to his first term on the Board by County Executive as an “at large” representative. We are awaiting to hear whether District 2 and District 4 will reappoint their current members for a second term and who will be appointed for District 5.

ECGRA Grant Presentation – Karen Pierce and Andrew Miller attended the presentation to ECGRA for the Beehive Innovation Network grant on Monday, January 30. We are awaiting to hear whether the Library will be awarded the three-year grant. This grant supports the programming and overall maintenance of the Idea Lab at Blasco.

Joint Operating Committee (JOC) Reconvenes – The JOC is a committee whose purpose is to establish policies and procedures for the use of common areas and other issues related to joint use of space. The JOC represent the Bayview Commons, the lobby area connecting the Blasco Library to the Maritime Museum, Admiral Room and HIRT Auditorium. This also includes some external walkways and the Planning Department. The committee includes the Library Director, Maritime Museum Director, Facilities Manager and Director of Planning. After many years, the committee has reconvened to work on initiatives such as security, updating policies and procedures and discussing upgrades and renovations.

OCL Visit and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for New Second Floor Bathrooms – The Blasco Library ribbon cutting ceremony for the new bathrooms will occur on Thursday, February 16 at 10:30am. In attendance will be Doug Smith, Director of Administration and Office of Commonwealth Library Liaison, Ed Lupico. Mr. Lupico represents the State for the Keystone Grant in which these bathrooms were match funded. Ed will be here to tour the library and see the progress on the current Keystone grant projects (bathrooms, elevators and front doors).

b. [Review of Financial Report- Deana](#)

See attached

c. [Statistical and Other Reports- Sheryl](#)

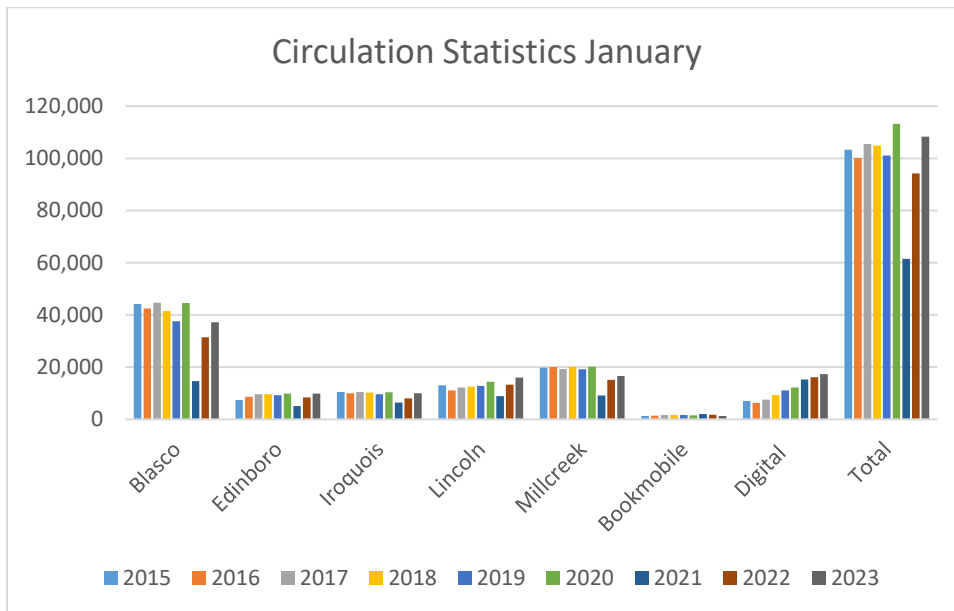


January 2023 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **614** new cards issued, including **123** e-cards

- **3,271** WiFi logins, **2,947** public PC logins across locations
- **32,450** patron visits, **18,329** at Blasco and **14,121** at branches and Bookmobile
Circulation



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blasco	44,131	42,512	44,687	41,536	37,585	44,550	14,593	31,483	37162
Edinboro	7,466	8,661	9,593	9,600	9,311	9,905	5,030	8,364	9863
Iroquois	10,539	10,025	10,492	10,208	9,597	10,340	6,445	8,083	9979
Lincoln	13,002	11,151	12,164	12,525	12,766	14,411	8,865	13,261	16047
Millcreek	19,826	19,999	19,345	20,130	19,132	20,200	9,179	15,106	16613
Bookmobile	1,264	1,445	1,683	1,627	1,595	1,571	2,017	1,716	1321
Digital	7,101	6,278	7,482	9,209	11,113	12,207	15,312	16,179	17366
Total	103,329	100,071	105,446	104,835	101,099	113,184	61,441	94,192	108,351

d. [Report of District Consultant](#)

District Services Report as of February 10, 2023
Updates for ECPL LAB Report
Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant

Annual Report Season

PA’s state-aided libraries have entered into annual report season. Each year, public libraries who receive state aid are ask to report counts, statistics, and financial information in a variety of categories including collections, circulation, programming, revenue, expenditures, and more. While much of this data does not impact their state aid distribution, it does help to paint an overall picture of the year. Libraries will submit this to the District Consultant by mid-March for initial review.

Strategic Planning Opportunity

With the increase in state aid at the district level, member libraries will have an opportunity to work with ReThinking Libraries, a firm based out of Indiana, to develop strategic and/or facilities-based plans that are customized to their locations. Libraries will begin the work by March, and hopefully each library will have resources in hand by the end of June.

4. Board and Committee Reports

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Erie Times-News



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2023 | GOERIE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

FIND LEADS TO STATE MARKER

'CONNECTING THE DOTS' TO HISTORY



Elementary schools are next to get detectors

Devices put in middle, high schools last year

Ed Palattella
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

In another sign of its increased concerns over the spike in youth violence in the city and nation, the Erie School District is set to install metal detectors at its 10 elementary schools after putting the devices at all its high schools and middle schools 10 months ago.

The district put the metal detectors in the middle and high schools in response to the shooting at Erie High on April 5.

Erie schools Superintendent Brian Polito said he is asking for the addition of detectors to the elementary schools in response to the continued problems with violence among juveniles in Erie and nationwide. He cited the shooting of a teacher by a 6-year-old student at a school in Newport News, Virginia, on Jan. 6.

"We are seeing some of the gun violence in the community trickle down to the elementary school level," Polito said.

Polito made the comments as he

Retired Erie engineer discovers the city's first known Underground Railroad station

Valerie Myers Erie Times-News | USA TODAY NETWORK

The site of a previously unknown Underground Railroad station in Erie will be commemorated by a new state historical marker, thanks to a retired Erie engineer.

- The Erie station was operated by freed Black woman Emma Howell and husband James Ford, who twice escaped slavery, at their East 12th and Parade Street home two centuries ago. Their story was uncovered by Kevin Johnson, who saw a mention of the station in a footnote.
- "I don't claim to be an historian," said Johnson, 61, who has a degree in math from Ohio State University and a master's degree in engineering from Gannon University. He worked as a mechanical engineer at GE Transportation in Erie and at Navistar in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and returned to Erie in 2011. He researched Ford Station with help from his wife and a few friends.
- "We just accumulated this information and wanted to get it out and fill in some holes in early Erie history," Johnson said. **See RAILROAD, Page 12A**

ABOVE: Kevin Johnson, 61, stands on the northeast corner of East 12th and Parade streets, where a state historical marker will commemorate the site of Erie's earliest known Underground Railroad station. The marker is planned for the grassy patch at left. GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Railroad

Continued from Page 12A

"It was a place where Black people in the city could safely congregate.

"And the Underground Railroad station was there, and on Howell's whole 45 acres, from 1811 to 1836."

The routes to Canada from Ford Station

Emma Howell's land provided easy access to Lake Erie.

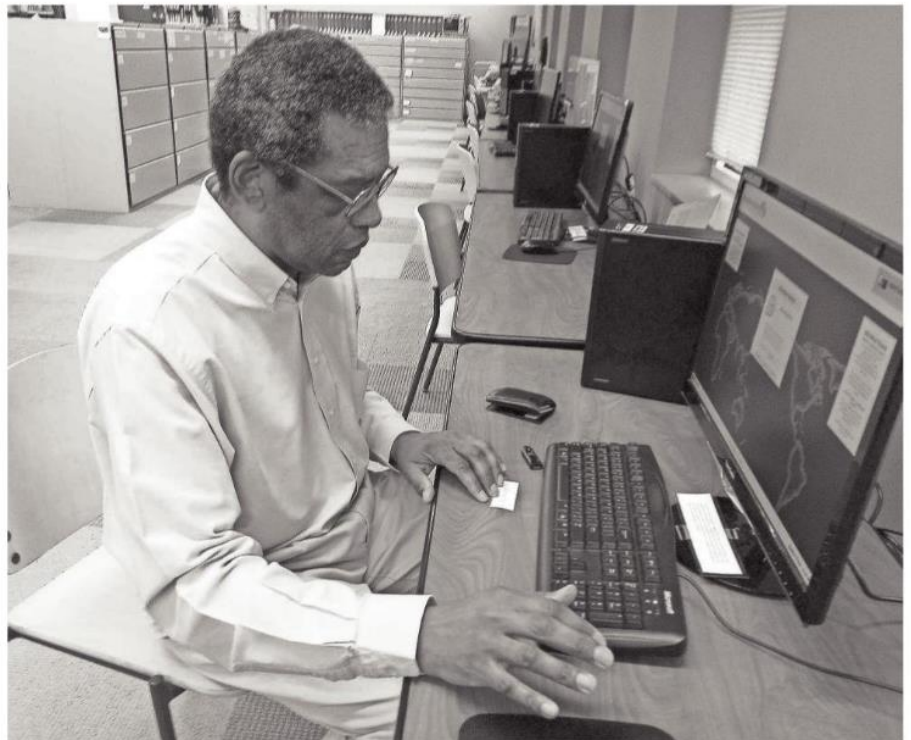
"From an 1816 map of Erie, the first route would be to go down Four Mile Creek to its mouth, where Erie's first dock was located, and leave from there," Johnson said.

When Emma Howell and James Ford's daughter, Amy, then 16 or 17, left for Canada with escapee John Martin in the late 1820s, she's believed to have taken a different route, overland to Niagara Falls.

"If they'd crossed the lake, they probably would have landed in Long Point and then could have settled in St. Thomas, London, Brantford, Hamilton, or any number of towns that were very acceptable to run-away slaves," Johnson said. "But if they went up the coast they would be in St. Catharines, where they settled, before they got to any of those towns."

Amy Ford married John Martin. Her parents "in their old age" sold their Erie property and went to live with her in St. Catharines.

Probable Ford Station ties to John Brown



Runaway slaves may have been guided to Ford Station along the Underground Railroad route from Crawford County operated by abolitionist John Brown, who had a tannery near present-day Guys Mills from 1825 to 1835. Brown's cousin, Miles Barnette of Waterford, also was a conductor on the line.

"If these runaways are coming from (Crawford County) to Waterford and presumably to Erie, Ford Station was the only Underground Railroad Station known to have been operating here before 1841," Johnson said.

Another indication that Ford Station may have been a stop along Brown's network is that a farmer working with Brown once asked for another wagon to accommodate seven or eight more fugitives than he could handle.

"If you can't handle seven or eight more people, how big was this group they're conducting and where would you put 14 or 15 or more runaways in Erie without them being seen?" Johnson said. "Besides Emma Howell's farm, there were only individual homes and buildings in Erie at that time. You could try to hide one person here and another there, but the Ford home and boarding house and its 45 acres on the outskirts of town seem to be the logical place for them to go."

And according to Amy Ford Martin's 1863 testimony, "The fugitives would be told to come to our house ... they used to hear of our place long before they got there."

Brown led the aborted raid on the U.S. arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859 in hopes of providing weapons for a slave insurrection in the South. He was captured, tried and executed.

Ford family ties to Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass

Harriet Tubman, an escapee known as "Moses" for repeatedly returning to the South to lead others to freedom, lived in the Black community in St. Catharines, Ontario, from 1851 until 1859. The small community was comprised of the formerly enslaved and their families, including John and Amy Martin and, after 1836, Emma Howell and James Ford.

"It was Harriet Tubman who recommended people in St. Catharines for Dr. Samuel Howe to interview," Johnson said, for the 1863 American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission. "And one of those people was Amy Martin."

It was her testimony that was mentioned in the footnote that sparked Johnson's search for information on her parents' Underground Railroad station in Erie.

Amy Martin for a time worked as a cook in the Rochester, New York, home of the wealthy George Mumford family.

"This family had other homes in San Francisco and

Kevin Johnson loads research on what's thought to be Erie's earliest Underground Railroad station on a computer in the Heritage Room of Blasco Library on Jan. 19. VALERIE MYERS/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

lated from its neighbors. James Ford and other family members were listed with their white neighbors as witnesses to an 1812 marriage performed by John Grubb, Emma Howell's former enslaver and Erie's first justice of the peace. The marriage certificate was written and preserved in a school workbook that belonged to one of Grubb's daughters.

"This document shows that they were treated as people and acknowledged as people. For me, it's the most important document in Erie, hands down," Johnson said.

Johnson hopes that others will be able to add to his research on early Underground Railroad operations in Erie. He also hopes to create a documentary as a kind of prequel to the "Safe Harbor" documentary about the Underground Railroad in Erie after Ford Station.

In the meantime, the Pennsylvania Historical Marker will commemorate Ford Station. A dedication date has not been set.

YourErie.com first reported on Johnson's research for the new marker.

Contact Valerie Myers at vmyers@timesnews.com.

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8

Paris and could have hired anyone they wanted to be their cook. So why a poor Black woman who lived in another country?" Johnson asked.

According to Johnson's research, it might have been because of Mumford's neighbor, Frederick Douglass. "Douglass had moved to Rochester in 1848 and was the town's version of a rock star. Everyone knew him, and he had visited St. Catharines a number of times," Johnson said.

Another servant in the Mumford home was related to Douglass by marriage.

"So Amy Martin lived next door to Frederick Douglass and worked with someone related to him. And there are other indications that she knew him," Johnson said.

Douglass escaped slavery and was among the nation's leading abolitionists before and during the Civil War.

A work still in progress

Kevin Johnson first planned to share his Ford Station research in a display at Blasco Library.

But each new discovery led to more questions and more research to answer them.

"It got to the point where a display would have to be huge to answer all these questions," he said.

Johnson instead wrote a book, "The Short Story, Big Life of Emma Howell, the Ford Family, and Erie's First Underground Railroad Station." Johnson self-published four copies of the book, including one available to the public in the Heritage Room of Blasco Library.

"It wasn't done for economic gain but to get this information out and fill in some holes in early Erie history," Johnson said. "This isn't really Black history. It's Erie history. These people came to Erie as early as anyone else did."

And the city's early Black community was not iso-

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Erie Times News- February 9, 2023

ENTERTAINMENT

Cupid comes early to Erie as Valentine's Day celebrations start Friday

ERIE TIMES-NEWS
USA TODAY NETWORK

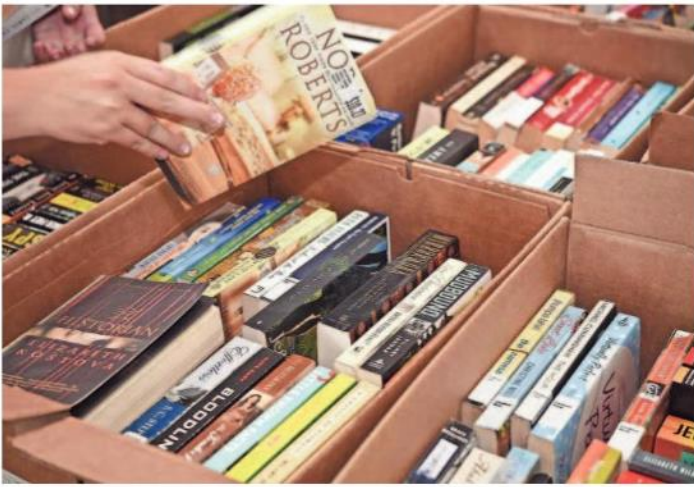
Blasco Library

Sweetheart of a (book) Sale: The Friends of the Library's Bayfront Bookshelf will host a used book sale this weekend in the Admiral Room of the Blasco Library, 160 E. Front St. The sale will take place this Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This sale will feature paperback books of many genres, including romance and fiction. DVDs, children's books, electronic media, large print books and puzzles will also be for sale.

Erie Runners Club

Erie Runners Club hosts its annual **Valentine Prediction Run**, in which it's not necessarily the fastest runner who wins, but the one who comes closest to predicting his or her time. It takes place Sunday at 10 a.m. and costs \$20 to enter. The course will be at least four miles but no more than six miles. Those participants closest to their predicted pace will receive their choice from a delicious selection of chocolate and candy awards. For more information and to register, visit <https://bit.ly/vdaypredictionrun>

Flagship City Food Hall



A shopper looks through the fiction section during a book sale at Blasco Memorial Library in Erie. ERIE TIMES-NEWS FILE PHOTO