

New & Noteworthy



Writer's Workshops & Short Story Contest

We are offering a new series of Writer's Workshops taught by local authors, including poet and ACE Award-winner Jim O'Brien. The first workshop drew 26 writers who were excited to get tips and to have a chance to meet like-minded community members. The February 19 workshop filled so quickly we had to start a waiting list a week ahead. We are also hosting a Short Story Contest with the top three finalists invited to read their stories at the award ceremony (April 11) during National Library Week. The winner will be announced that evening. We are collaborating with the University of Illinois Creative Writing group for the grand prize, two of the workshop instructors, and one contest judge. Details are available on our website at champaign.org/short-story.

This Just In: Award-Winning Author Sharon Flake Visits Douglass

Just added to the calendar: As part of the University of Illinois Youth Literature Festival, bestselling and award-winning author Sharon Flake will visit the Douglass Branch to connect with young readers and talk about her work on Friday, March 29, at 2 p.m. The event is open to the public—and fifth-grade students from next-door neighbor Booker T. Washington STEM Academy will be our special guests.

Event Goes Viral – Crafty Adults: Mini Terrariums

Our new Crafty Adults series has gone viral, with the upcoming workshop on making terrariums (March 13) reaching 19.6K people via our Facebook event page, including many Millennials. More than 1,250 community members are interested—and half of those are women, ages 18–34. Joan Jach of Old Town Flowers will teach participants how to use succulents and other plants to build a mini indoor garden.

Program Highlights



The U of I Veterinary Student Outreach Program brought 20 veterinarians-in-training to the library to teach 151 kids and family members how they heal animals at Teddy Bear Hospital.

2,596 Visitors to 65 Children's Events in January

The Children's Department at the Main Library hosted 65 events for 2,596 visitors during January, with just over half of the attendance coming from activities targeting preschoolers. Kids and their families attended Teddy Bear Hospital, our first Sensory-Friendly Storytime, and a new, wildly popular, monthly LEGO Club. In addition, our Mother Goose on the Loose, Dana Antonelli, presented 47 storytimes at area childcare centers in January, with more than 500 children and adults attending.

Family Fort & Reading Event Drew 63 Participants on a Chilly Evening

On January 31, we welcomed 63 kids and families to make lanterns in the Nate & Lillie Story Room, build elaborate blanket forts in the Children's area, select books, read together inside the forts, listen to stories around a "campfire" in the Robeson Pavilion, and enjoy s'mores from the Library Café, as part of our first Family Fort & Reading Night. We presented participants with s'mores gift certificates and handed out 60 more that evening to appreciative adult visitors throughout the library. Café staff engineered kits for the s'mores ahead of time, so they could quickly melt and serve them.

Outreach to Residents at Senior Centers

In January, Adult Services librarian Lavana Hawkins presented a new activity designed for seniors with memory issues, "Walk With a Friend," for 53 participants at area care centers.

Douglass Branch Highlights



Jamia got a new library card; a DIY Kids mask-making workshop led to fun superhero poses; and one instrument-maker was all smiles when testing her new shakers.

Parent Lab @ Douglass Launched

The new Parent Lab @ Douglass series brought 20 community members, eight Project READ volunteers, and Champaign Unit 4 staff to the Douglass Branch for the first Branch-based session. Parent Lab meets weekly at Booker T. Washington STEM Academy and once a month at Douglass. We served a pizza dinner to participants and provided childcare in the form of age-appropriate activities for the children who came with their parents. Upcoming sessions will take place on Monday evenings, March 11, April 10, and May 13.

DIY Kids activities bring kids and families to the Douglass Branch on Wednesday afternoons after school to enjoy do-it-yourself projects. In February, we are hosting two workshops related to Black History Month—Black History Bingo and a chance to make a mancala board and join the annual Mancala Tournament.

Club Fred: 97 Kids Participated During January

During January, 97 schoolchildren joined Club Fred activities after school—playing games on the Xbox and Wii, using laptops for homework and games, and playing board games.

Loyal Table Talk Book Club Members

In addition to the February Table Talk Book Club discussion, members joined an NEA Big Read discussion about Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* on February 14 at the Branch. The NEA Big Read Champaign-Urbana is a partnership among the Spurlock Museum, the International and Area Studies Library at the University of Illinois, the Urbana Free Library, the Champaign Public Library, and The Art Theater. The NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest. Up next month for Table Talk? *What Truth Sounds Like* by Michael Eric Dyson.

Library Love from Our Customers

>> After the Getting to Know Tablets workshop, a participant stopped at the second-floor service desk and expressed **how amazing it is that we offer these great technology workshops for free**. She also said she loves coming to the library because we're all so helpful. (Tracy A., Adult Services)

>> At the recent Fit & Fabulous Zumba workshops, several attendees thanked us for offering "such a wonderful opportunity for people like me." One participant shared: **"I am so happy I could cry"**. Finally, something I can do and feel proud of myself for doing it!" (Connie F., Adult Services)

>> When a parent was asked if their toddler found anything fun in the play area, she said "So many things! We love it here. **This is our home away from home.**" (Mike R., Children's Services)

>> A child came into the Branch chanting "Fantastic fantastic, great great, fantastic fantastic, great great." When I asked her what was so fantastic and great, she said, "My mom told me **I get to take the bus to the library after school every day forever!**" (Amanda R., Douglass Branch)

>> A customer stopped by to find out what activities we may have for children next weekend. Her grandchildren came to Life-size Candy Land and this customer raved about how wonderful it was: "It was **such a lovely event! Well organized and so much fun for everyone**. I know I shouldn't expect something of that scale every weekend, but I wanted to share how wonderful it was. A great deal of work obviously went into it and I just want to say THANK YOU!" (Linda K., Children's Services)

>> A customer approached the Welcome desk and remarked **how great it is that we have free Wifi access** in the building. She doesn't have home connectivity and had a huge update that was ready to be installed on her phone. She was able to come in and grab a mystery book to read while she waited to do the update over our Wifi network. She also told me that the book was good enough that she checked it out! She also mentioned how much **she enjoys attending the Tuesdays at Ten talks** where all the speakers have been fascinating, and she's learned quite a lot. (Susan W., Adult Services)

>> A three-year-old chose three Easy Readers and told me, **"I found some wonderful books!"** (Amanda R., Douglass Branch)

