



DIGITAL LITERACY NEWS

Closing the gap of the digital divide

On November 21, Empire State Development announced \$1.53 million in grants awarded as part of Governor Hochul's ConnectALL Digital Equity Technical Assistance Fund to improve the New York State digital equity ecosystem. Our partners, at the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, Inc. (MVEDDD) were awarded \$100,000 to develop a comprehensive digital equity plan to expand digital inclusion across the Mohawk Valley Region which includes Schoharie, Montgomery, and Fulton counties. Their goals include improving the area's digital infrastructure and expanding broadband access, affordability, and equity. We will continue to provide updates as we learn more about the impact this assistance offers and the plans and partnerships that develop.

In other digital news, MVLS is now a licensed partner with Senior Planet, part of Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP. As a licensed partner, we now have access to over 150 classes and will begin offering in-person classes soon. The process to become a partner included a written application, an interview with the Senior Planet Licensing Team, and a five-week Train-the-Trainer series including a practice teaching session with peers. Congratulations to Mary Carrier from MVLS and Kim Zimmer, Library Director of The Community Library, for completing the series. It is a huge accomplishment!



Watch for Senior Planet classes to be offered at The Community Library and other member libraries in the upcoming year.

Award Recipient

PLA Digital Literacy Workshop Incentive, Supported by AT&T

PublicLibrary ASSOCIATION AT&T

GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT

We are thrilled to announce that MVLS has been awarded a \$10,000 grant incentive from the Public Library Association (PLA), supported by AT&T. This is the third year MVLS has received the award, with this year being the highest dollar amount granted. Mary Carrier, Technology and Growth Consultant for MVLS will spearhead the digital literacy training for member libraries in 2025. Our goal is to reach a minimum of 75 learners to meet the grant requirements.

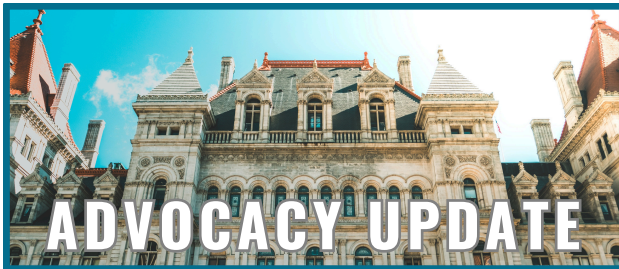
Amsterdam Free Library will offer classes for interested patrons. Additionally, lessons are available as self-paced tutorials on the Digital Learn website that many libraries have added as an icon to their public computer desktops. In-person classes will be held January through May, concentrating on computer basics, internet basics, cybersecurity, and email. The popular smartphone classes for iPhones and Android phones will be returning as well.

Contact Mary Carrier, mcarrier@mvls.info, to schedule a Digital Learn or Senior Planet class in your library in 2025.

-continued from page 1-

- Sarah Carbone from the Amsterdam Free Library and Beth Rienti from MVLS attended a tabling event at Centro Civico in Amsterdam. 250 people stopped by their table at this Backpack Event!
- MVLS awarded a total of \$5,047 to six libraries for Outreach Mini-Grants. Watch for the opportunity to apply for funding again in the new year.

Beth and Mary at MVLS will continue to make plans to extend outreach efforts outside our building walls .



ELECTION RESULTS

Incumbents win. Some changes on the way.

Every two years, the potential exists for significant changes in elected representatives. Seats in the New York State Assembly and Senate, as well as those in the United States House of Representatives, are up for election every two years.

This year, as in years past, most of the local election winners were incumbents.

The exception this year, is the 46th State Senate District. Senator Neil Breslin has served in that role since 1997, making him the current longest-serving State Senator. He announced his retirement early this year. Patricia Fahy won the election to replace him. Senator-elect Fahy has served in the State Assembly since 2013, where she currently represents parts of Albany County.

The remainder of the State Legislature members representing the MVLS region are all incumbents who were reelected.

The beginning of a new session in the State Legislature comes with new committee assignments. In particular, there will be a new Chair for the Senate Libraries Committee because the current Chair was not reelected.

TRUSTEE CORNER

Checklist for Effective Library Trustees

- Be familiar with current library services and programs, including online resources.
- Understand and respect the role of the Library Director and administrative decisions.
- Be respectful of all opinions of your fellow board members, library director, and staff, even if you disagree.
- Attend all board meetings and be prepared to participate knowledgeably by reading the board packet before the meeting.
- Remember your primary job is to provide the highest quality library service possible to your community.
- Advocate for the library in every way possible.

Find the full checklist from the [Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State \(2023 Edition\)](#).

Beyond our New York borders, there are many other resources for trustees and library boards. Information provided by [WebJunction](#) offers more perspectives.

On the Federal level, while Congressman Paul Tonko and Congresswoman Elise Stefanik were both reelected, one significant change is on the horizon. Congresswoman Stefanik has been announced as President Trump's nominee for the UN Ambassador. As a result, she will have to step down as a member of Congress. That will likely occur after she is approved by the US Senate, and that will be followed by a Special Election. Therefore, her seat could be vacant for a couple months. Some of the potential candidates for her seat are currently representing the MVLS region, so there is a potential for further changes down the line.

It is important to stay up to date with news on this subject, and MVLS will continue to monitor any changes and update the Advocacy section of the MVLS website.

As a reminder, Legislative Advocacy Day is planned for Wednesday, February 5, 2025.

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH FOOD INSECURITY



Did you know nearly one in five children in New York State are food insecure? This is a sobering statistic!

Here are ways that libraries can help families in need:

1. Connect with your local WIC office (Women, Infants, & Children).
2. Have up-to-date information available for users. WIC offers free information for families in both English and Spanish. You can order free supplies for your library.
3. Connect with Hunger Solutions NY for information on the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), SNAP benefits, and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

Childhood hunger is even worse during the summer months. Only 25 percent of children who qualify for free and reduced lunch during the school year eat through the SFSP. Public libraries can make a difference by partnering with the SFSP to be a site where children can either eat or pick up meals.

This could be a wonderful addition to your summer programming, as well as a fabulous outreach opportunity.

COLLECTIONS CORNER

New Storytime Resources

Rum, pum, pum, let's play drums!

Beginning in 2025, MVLS will be offering heavy-duty hand drums for use with groups of children ages 2 and up.

MVLS continues to add new storytime support resources, including these new felt sets: *Three Little Pigs*, *The Gingerbread Man*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*

Do you have suggestions for new storytime/children's programming resources? Share your ideas with Beth at brienti@mvls.info.



Beth Rienti & Sharon Springs Free Library Director Meghan Keaney visited Sharon Springs Head Start to plan collaborative programs and do a fun read-aloud with the preschool class.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2025

SAVE THE DATES!

Summer Reading Planning Workshop, Tuesday, 1/14 (snow date 1/15) at the Colonie Town Library

Cabin Fever Club, Winter 2025, (see the accompanying flyer for details)

Take Your Child to the Library Day, Saturday, 2/1

NYLA Advocacy Day, Wednesday, 2/5

Children's SRP Virtual Planning Workshop, Tuesday, 2/25, 9:30am - 12:30pm

Teen SRP Virtual Planning Workshop, Tuesday, 3/11, 9:30am - 12:30pm

CABIN FEVER CLUB

Winter 2025

JANUARY

Wednesday, 1/29, 11am -12pm

Beyond the Pines: Colonial Schenectady

*Mike Diana, Schenectady County
Historical Society*

Thursday, 1/30, 11am -12pm

Is Mythology Guiding Your Genealogy?

Lisa Dougherty, Genealogist

FEBRUARY

Tuesday, 2/4, 11am -12pm

Spotting Fake News

Mary Carrier, MVLS

Wednesday, 2/12, 11am -12pm

American Impressionism & The Eight,

Mary Alexander, Arkell Museum

Tuesday, 2/18, 11am -12pm

Healthy Living for Your Brain & Body,

Meagan DeMento, Alzheimer's Association

Wednesday, 2/26, 11am-12pm

Container Gardening

*Master Gardeners, Cornell Cooperative
Extension of Schenectady County*

MARCH

Tuesday, 3/11, 11am - 12pm

10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

Meagan DeMento, Alzheimer's Association

Lunch & Learn with Mary

Wednesdays in March

Noon - 1pm

Ditch It & Downsize - 3/12

Visit the Library in Your PJs - 3/19

Understanding Cloud Storage - 3/26

All classes will be held online via Zoom.
Registration required.



IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY

From the Tech Tutor

Always look for an opportunity to improve your digital experience. Rather than suffer in silence, here are a few tips to make your visual and audio experience better for yourself and others while using smartphones and other devices.

Smartphones

Check out the accessibility options in your settings, which are labeled in categories such as Vision, Hearing, Physical and Motor, and General. Tap on the Settings icon, then tap on Accessibility.

- **Zoom** - Turn Zoom on to magnify the entire screen. Use 3 fingers and drag on the screen to navigate as you read. Double tap the screen with 3 fingers to go in and out of zoom mode for iPhones.
- **Display & Text Size** - Turn on Bold Text for darker font, and tap on Larger Text to increase the text size by dragging the slider along the bottom to the right.
- **Voice Control** - By setting up Voice Control, you can use your voice to control your phone. Use built-in commands and create new commands for the phone to follow. Use TalkBack for Android phones.

Remember, you can also dictate a text message by tapping on the microphone icon when you are ready to start a new message. Many people love this feature on their phone. However, it is always a good idea to proofread your message before you send it.

Digital assistants such as Siri, Alexa, and Google are beneficial for setting reminders, timers, and to get the weather forecast. You will be surprised at the number of commands they can tackle.

Connect Alexa to your smart TV or Roku remote to adjust volume and switch channels. Use the smart home app and Alexa to turn on and off lights in your home. And always a favorite, use Alexa or Google Nest to play music from Spotify or listen to your audiobook from the Libby app.



Our member libraries sure are BUSY!

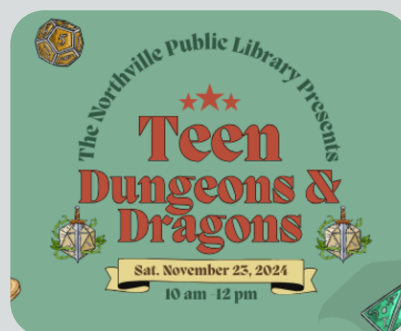
Amsterdam Free Library - Pets for Vets: presented by Amsterdam Kitten Adoption

The Community Library & Middleburgh Library - Dinovember Scavenger Hunt

Fort Plain Free Library - New Through the Lens camera club and Evening Storytime

Schoharie Free Library - Youth Pride Meetup

Northville Public Library - Teen Book Club & Teen Dungeons & Dragons



Send an email to mcarrier@mvls.info and tell us what you've been up to.

CELEBRATIONS & SHOUT OUTS

Cheers to the staff and volunteers at Middleburgh Library for another breathtaking Hogwarts Halloween celebration! The library looked magical, and every attendee was spellbound as they picked out their wands at Ollivander's, stopped by their vault in Gringotts, and headed to Honeydukes to spend that hard-earned gold!



Wizards school was in session as patrons attended classes in Herbology and Potions, while keeping an eye out for any hidden magical creatures.



CONTACT US

Do you have questions we can answer? Helpful comments? Want to tell us about something going on at your library? Email us or call us at 518-355-2010.

- **Eric Trahan:** Executive Director, ext. 223, etrahan@mvls.info
- **Sharon O'Brien:** Assistant Director, Member Services Coordinator, ext. 226, sobrien@mvls.info
- **Kate Clingan:** Office Administrator, ext. 221, kclingan@mvls.info
- **Beth Rienti:** Public Services Consultant, ext. 225, brienti@mvls.info
- **Mary Carrier:** Technology & Growth Consultant, ext. 233, mcarrier@mvls.info
- **Wade Abbott:** Community Engagement & Communications Specialist, ext. 230, wabbott@mvls.info

Not sure who to contact?
Check out [MVLS Staff At a Glance](#)