



Library Recognition Award 2025 Nomination Form

Please answer the following 3 questions using this form. Make your answers descriptive and concise. Sell your project or service! This written part of the application should be no more than 2 pages total. You may add up to 2 additional pages of support materials – photos, publicity materials, news stories, etc. The overall application package may not exceed 4 pages total.

I nominate the Sharon Springs Free Library for the **2025** MVLS Library Recognition Award. Project

Title: Story Squad with Ms. Meg: An Outreach Partnership with the Sharon Youth Commission

Submitted by: Meghan Keaney / Sharon Springs Free Library

Submit nomination via email to kclingan@mvls.info by Monday, September 8, 2025

1. Describe what you did. Where and when did activities & services take place? Who were your partners?

For the second summer in a row, I partnered with the Sharon Youth Commission to bring Story Squad to the local recreation center. The 6-week Summer Rec Program (rec) for children in Grades K–6 runs Monday through Friday, 9 :00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., offering activities, swim lessons, and thanks to the partnership with the Joshua Project, free lunch for participants. Once a week (July 9th-August 13th), I visited the rec program with a bag full of books curated around the children’s interests and the rec program’s weekly themes. Each session featured stories around those themes, hands-on crafts, and a raffle for free ice cream, thanks to the generous gift certificate donations from Stewart’s.

At the start of the summer, all rec participants are divided into swim groups, each named after a unique water creature. These creatures are designed by the kids themselves as part of the annual Water Creature Drawing Contest. The winning designs are then used to represent each swim group. On Wednesdays, these groups rotated through activities: one attended swim lessons, one joined Story Squad, and the remaining group enjoyed open play, crafts, and relaxation time. This structure allowed for smaller, more engaged groups during Story Squad sessions (at most 20 kids per group).

At the end of the summer, Stewart’s once again supported us by donating ice cream sundae kits for our “End of Summer Ice Cream Social”, celebrating all summer reading program participants and rec kids. Library board members and volunteers helped scoop and distribute 50 ice cream sundaes.

Weekly Themes & Attendance:

Week 1: “Wav-Ing Hello to Summer” 83 kids in attendance

We introduced Story Squad, set expectations, and talked about the library. We also introduced our reading buddy mascot and brainstormed names for them. Kids shared their favorite books and interests to help guide future book selections.

Week 2: “Color the World” 73 kids in attendance

Children designed personalized crayon bookmarks for their summer reading adventures. We read colorful, vibrant stories and provided time for independent book exploration.

Week 3: “Let’s Celebrate” 67 kids in attendance

We learned about Friendsgiving and discussed gratitude. The kids shared what they were thankful for and collaborated on a “Gratitude Garland” that was displayed at the rec center, while also engaging in independent reading.

Week 4: “We’re Under Construction” 70 kids in attendance

Guest readers Mr. Devin and Ms. Ella (rec staff) joined me to read The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds. Kids created their own dots for a collaborative mural and explored titles by the same author, followed by independent reading time.

Week 5: “Give Me Some Space” 70 kids in attendance

We imagined going on a rocket ship adventure, complete with astronaut names and space-themed crafts. Kids chose what they’d bring on their space journey and browsed space-themed books (fiction and non-fiction).

Week 6: “Life’s a Ball!” 69 kids in attendance

We celebrated the end of Story Squad with a glitter globe craft and signed Ms. Meg’s beach ball to remember the summer. Each child marked our reading buddy’s super reading cape with a thumbprint to show they were part of the 2025 Story Squad.

2. What community need did your project address? Why did you develop this activity or service? Story Squad was developed in response to several key community needs: access to literacy resources during the summer, opportunities for creative expression, and meaningful engagement with the library outside of the physical space.

Many families rely on the local recreation center for summertime childcare and enrichment, but not all children are able to regularly visit the library. Story Squad brings the library to them, meeting kids where they are with books, stories, and activities that encourage a love of reading. By incorporating themed read-alouds, hands-on crafts, and time for independent book exploration, the program supports literacy development in a fun, low-pressure environment.

Additionally, the rotating schedule (aligned with swim groups) ensures smaller group sizes, giving each child the chance to participate, contribute, and connect. The program strengthens community partnerships, particularly with the Sharon Youth Commission, the Rec Program Director, and rec staff, building positive associations with reading, learning, and the library itself.

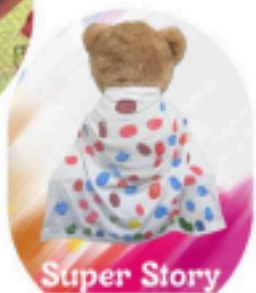
Ultimately, Story Squad was created to reduce barriers to library access, maintain engagement with books during the “summer slide,” and foster joy, creativity, and community through stories. By partnering with another local organization that serves the same children, we were able to pool our resources, enhance the experience, and reach more kids without needing additional staff or funding- something rural communities like ours often struggle with.

3. Describe how this project or service made a difference in your community using statistics, stories & photos. Who benefited and how did they benefit? Will you continue this activity or service? Why? Story Squad made a significant impact on our community by bringing consistent, enriching literacy experiences directly to children enrolled in the summer rec program. Over the six-week program, I engaged with approximately 70 children each week. Last year, attendance each week was as follows: Week 1: 60, Week 2: 55, Week 3: 45, Week 4: 45, Week 5: 45, Week 6: 52. This year, attendance in the entire rec program reached record-high enrollment (2025, Week 1: 83, Week 2: 72, Week 3: 67, Week 4: 70, Week 5: 70, Week 6: 69.) In the July 18th, 2025, issue of *the Mountain Eagle*, the rec program and the library’s partnership were featured: “One of the highlights this year is the continued partnership with the Sharon Springs Free Library, where Library Director Meghan Keaney hosts a weekly reading program for the Rec kids – an initiative that’s become a favorite among both students and parents....”

Children benefited by gaining access to high interest books and hands-on literacy activities that felt fun, relaxed, and safe. Many eagerly returned each week, asking about upcoming stories or activities. The inclusion of a reading buddy mascot, collaborative crafts, and a visible “story presence” at the rec center helped reinforce the idea that reading isn’t just academic, it’s social, creative, and joyful.

We absolutely plan to continue this program. Its flexible, engaging format allows it to grow and adapt to new themes and interests each summer. It strengthens connections between the library and local families, supports summer learning, and fosters positive community relationships, all core components of our library’s mission.

With continued support from partners like the Sharon Youth Commission and Stewart’s, Story Squad is becoming a cherished summer tradition that keeps literacy alive even outside the library’s walls.



Super Story

STORY SQUAD

WITH MISS MEG
EVERY WEDNESDAY DURING REC



Sharon Rec Center Opens for 2025 Season with Record-High Enrollment and Exciting New Partnerships

SHARON SPRINGS — Summer is in full swing, and so is the Sharon Rec Center, officially open for the 2025 season and serving more than 90 students in grades K-6 from Sharon Springs and the surrounding areas.

The six-week summer program is jam-packed with engaging activities designed to promote fun, learning, and community. Children enrolled in the program enjoy free swim lessons, daily arts and crafts, and an array of sporting activities such as soccer and frisbee. One of the highlights this year is the continued partnership with the Sharon Springs Free Library, where Library Director Meghan Keaney hosts a weekly reading program for the Rec kids — an initiative that's become a favorite among both students and parents.

The Rec Center has also teamed up again with the Schoharie County Youth Bureau, which provides weekly programming focused on team building and youth development — helping children build confidence, friendships, and leadership skills.

At the heart of it all is Valerie Ducharme, the beloved Rec Director whose leadership has helped the program flourish in years. Parents praise her dedication, and kids love the energy she brings every day. Mrs. Ducharme serves as the Afternoon Program Coordinator for Sharon Springs.



School, and she's brought the same energy and success from that role into the summer Rec Center program.

New this summer, the Sharon Rec Center has proudly partnered with The Joshua Project to provide free lunch to Rec participants and the broader community. Thanks to this generous collaboration, over 90 meals are served daily, Monday through Friday, ensuring no child goes hungry during the summer months.

The Sharon Town Pool remains a central hub of summertime activity. It's

book page.

In partnership with the Schoharie County Youth Bureau, several exciting field trips are planned for local youth throughout the summer. Families are encouraged to stay updated via the Sharon Youth Commission Facebook page for registration details and announcements.

Anyone interested in getting involved with the program or supporting the efforts of the Sharon Youth Commission, a nonprofit organization, is welcome to reach out via email at sharonyouthcommis-

We've got the winners of our Annual Water Creature Contest! They'll get bragging rights and have their drawings represent a swim group — talk about a cool perk!

Presenting the 2025 Swim Group Line Up:

The Hammerheads by Tyler
The Gum-ball Fish by Mila
The Vampire Squids by Emma
The Sea Turtles by Alexa
The Pink Dolphins by Izzy

Congrats to our winners and an awesome job to all the kids who participated!



THANK YOU STEWART'S!



End of Summer Ice Cream Social

Friday, August 15th
@ 1 p.m.



Sharon Springs Pool
111 Washburn Ave, Sharon
Springs, NY 13459

Ice cream will be limited to
REC and Summer Reading
children only.



Hosted and sponsored by
The Sharon Springs Youth Commission & The Sharon Springs Free Library



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