



Maricopa County
READS

Maricopa County Reads
2021 Summer Reading Program

Summary & Report



Maricopa County
Library District
where curiosity leads

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Overview

[Maricopa County Library District](#) (MCLD) is proud to share the success of its annual online, countywide Summer Reading Program. From June 1st to August 1st all public libraries and two tribal libraries (65 locations, representing 17¹ library systems), the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Library and, new this year, the Maricopa County Durango Juvenile Facility encouraged over 53,000 county residents to participate in our Summer Reading Program. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic still effecting our approach to library services offered, the opening of our doors and a proactive marketing campaign led to a significant jump in participation numbers from last year while maintaining engagement by those participants.

Our primary goals for the 2021 Summer Reading Program were to interrupt the summer slide and promote literacy among children and families. To meet those goals our objectives focused on encouraging parents and caregivers to model positive reading behaviors to their children, promote reading at least twenty minutes a day, and building home libraries. We incorporated multiple strategies to achieve these objectives into the Great Reading Adventure software and offline in our marketing strategy and building relationships in communities.

Each year we build the Summer Reading Program around a theme provided by the [Collaborative Summer Library Program](#) (CSLP), this year we celebrated animal stories with "Tails and Tales". The Arizona State Library supplies supporting materials created by CSLP to each of the participating libraries. MCLD staff and representatives from many of the 17 library systems planned a comprehensive program that included an interactive online platform to record program activity, digital badges, challenges, prizes and sponsored coupons, community experiences, a series of free and engaging virtual events, and a marketing campaign to spread awareness.

We continued our partnership with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to provide a Summer Reading Program to adults experiencing incarceration with the goal of reducing recidivism. This program positively affects this community by encouraging them to read for learning and enjoyment and incentivizes them with the ability to select their next books to read with each completed log. The dates for this program were extended to better fit their library structure. Participants completed 1,243 reading logs from June 1st to September 15th.

We established a new partnership to bring the Summer Reading Program to kids in the

¹ This year the Morristown volunteer library was closed and did not participate.

Maricopa County Durango Juvenile Detention Center. In conjunction with the Phoenix Public Library, we helped the detention center run the program at their school so that kids can engage with the online program to track their own reading to earn coupons and a free book.

Goals and Outcomes

The two primary goals of the Summer Reading Program are:

1. Interrupt the summer slide, the common term given to the learning loss experienced by children while transitioning between school years.
2. Promote literacy among children and their families.

As children and families recover from the unpredictability of the 2020-2021 school year and move into another irregular school year, accomplishing these goals became even more important.

The objectives (in bold) and the strategies employed to accomplish our larger goals included:

- 1. Challenging all participants to read at least 20 minutes every day**
 - Provide milestone incentives at 500, 750, and 1,000 points and weekly drawing prizes
 - Encouraging teens and adults to model reading to the children in their lives
- 2. Building a home library**
 - Provide a free book or option to donate book to a Head Start classroom to all participants who reach 1,000 points during the program.
- 3. Communicate literacy messages in simple easy to understand ways**
 - Include early literacy tips and information to parents within the software
- 4. Emphasize the fun of reading**
 - Links to online read-aloud stories for children who may not have access to books
 - Streaming virtual events provided by diverse performers to build background knowledge and comprehension skills
- 5. Reconnect participants with community experiences through prizes, virtual programming and challenges.**
 - Create community connections through program prizes and programs
 - Community experiences build background knowledge and comprehension skills.
 - Provide short engaging videos on the participant dashboard featuring a partner organization; Liberty Wildlife featured a different animal in their care each week.

Using the Great Reading Adventure software or optional paper game board, participants work towards a total reading goal of 1,000 minutes in 9 weeks by building a habit of reading twenty minutes a day. Participants achieve incentives at point milestones along the way including a free food coupon at 500 points, an Arizona State Park Pass at 750 points, and a free book at 1,000 points. Additionally, the program promotes lifelong learning to our teen and adult participants. We encourage their participation by asking them to model positive reading behaviors to the children or non-readers in their lives as they work towards their own reading goal. Each milestone incentive serves as a motivator for all ages to reach their reading goal and ultimately helps build home libraries, an important aspect of increasing children's literacy success, whether they chose a book for themselves or donate it to a Head start classroom.

Consistent and robust staff training is important to meeting our goals and the program's overall success. MCLD provided interactive training modules and toolkits with goals, talking points, and functionality of the online program to all participating library systems and the Durango Juvenile Detention center. We created and distributed three online trainings: one for administrators, one for customer service staff and a general program overview.

Overall Statistics

The Summer Reading Program encourages readers of all ages to participate and is broken out into four age groups: Pre-readers (Birth to 4), Kids (5 to 11), Teens (12 to 17) and adults (18+). 53,330 participants registered online from May 1st to August 1st when the program closed. Of those, 24,534 became achievers earning at least 1,000 points, an achiever rate of 46%.

- 49,269,632 minutes read
- 785, 834 digital badges earned
- 21,927 challenges completed
- 18,588 free books awarded and redeemed by achievers
- 1,247 free books donated to local Head Start classrooms
- 1,243 Reading Logs completed in the Maricopa County Jails

The following graph illustrates Summer Reading participation and achievement over the past 4 years. 2018 & 2019 show our program statistics in normal years, 2020 shows the impact of the pandemic and 2021 shows our road to recovery when the numbers increased and maintained a high achiever rate.

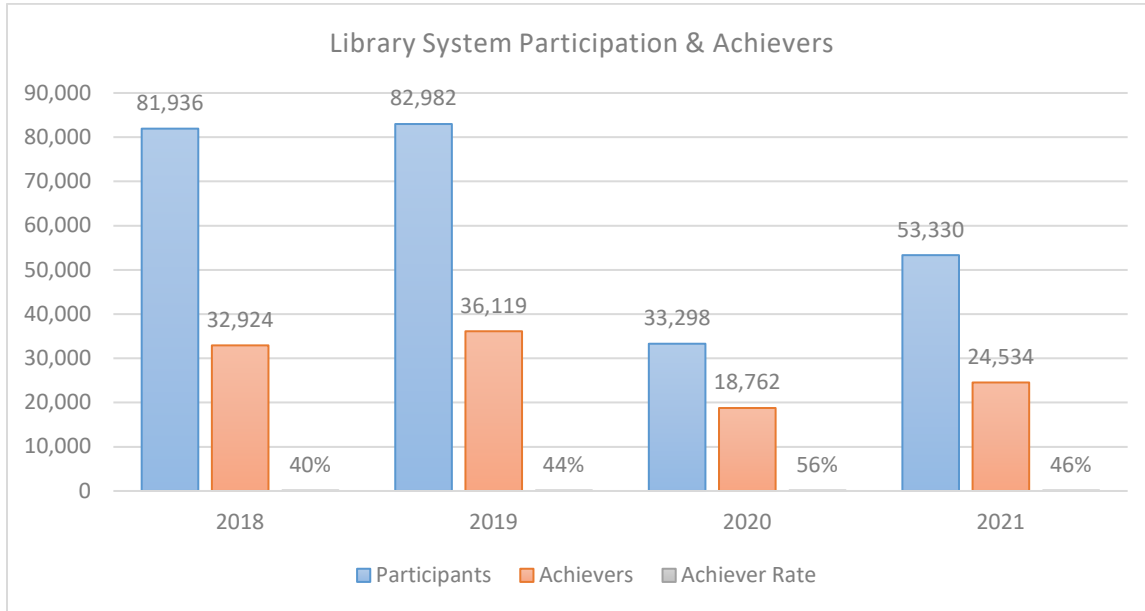


Figure 1: System Wide Participants and Achievers 2018-2021

2021 Participants and Achievers by Library System

Library System	Total Participants	Total Achievers	Rate of Achievement
Avondale	712	245	34%
Buckeye	2,466	759	31%
Chandler	7,320	3924	54%
Desert Foothills	234	67	21%
Fort McDowell	34	5	14%
Glendale	1,924	958	50%
Luke Air Force Base	121	99	82%
MCLD	14,486	7,026	48%
Mesa	5,457	2,510	32%
Peoria	2,551	965	38%
Phoenix	11,739	4,865	41%
Salt River Tribal Library	87	9	10%
Scottsdale	3,927	1,981	50%
Tempe	2,001	1,000	50%
Tolleson	143	76	53%
Wickenburg	72	21	29%
Youngtown	56	24	43%
TOTAL	53,330	24,534	46%

Figure 2: 2021 Participant and Achievers by Library System

Breaking our statistics down by age group, we can see which groups reach 1000 points at the highest rates, this year our adults had the highest achiever rate at 55% followed by our teens at 51%. Independent readers reach the 1,000 goal at a higher rate illustrating a need to find creative ways to encourage consistent tracking for the 5-11 age group.

Participants and Achievers by Program & Library System

Library System	Prereaders		Kids		Teens		Adults			
	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers		
Avondale Public Library	133	38	288	78	93	39	198	90		
Buckeye Public Library	390	125	1203	327	290	101	583	206		
Chandler Public Library	817	445	3446	1654	988	569	2069	1256		
Desert Foothills Library	37	14	137	27	19	8	41	18		
Fort McDowell Yavapai Tribal Library	8	0	17	1	3	1	6	3		
Glendale Public Library	257	122	872	872	358	252	142	543	543	336
Luke Air Force Base	14	10	45	34	8	7	54	48		
Maricopa County Library District	1712	798	6860	2746	2053	1126	3861	2356		
Mesa Public Library	852	360	2285	918	699	376	1621	856		
Peoria Public Library	284	98	1332	385	372	177	563	305		
Phoenix Public Library	1614	633	5069	1781	1354	628	3702	1823		
Salt River Tribal Library	7	0	40	3	19	1	21	5		
Scottsdale Public Library	556	278	1744	774	498	271	1129	658		
Tempe Public Library	211	82	1128	580	165	91	497	247		
Tolleson Public Library	16	6	90	48	10	6	27	16		
Wickenburg Public Library	9	1	50	13	7	2	6	5		
Youngtown Public Library	7	0	16	1	5	1	28	22		
TOTALS	6924	3010	24,622	9728	6835	3546	14,949	8250		

Figure 3: 2021 Participants and Achievers by Age and Library System

Marketing

Prior to the launch of this year's program, many participating library systems identified a need for additional social media graphics and overall marketing support. Because of this, the MCLD Communications Team focused on providing more promotional materials and opportunities to participating systems.

MCLD significantly increased the amount of social media graphics provided to partner systems this year. The branded graphics helped to highlight various elements of the program, including prizes and challenges. The MCLD Team also created a variety of Open Graph images that would change throughout the summer. This automatically provided a fresh Summer Reading graphic on social media platforms, easily accessible to participating systems just by typing [MaricopaCountyReads.org](https://www.maricopacountyreads.org) into a post.

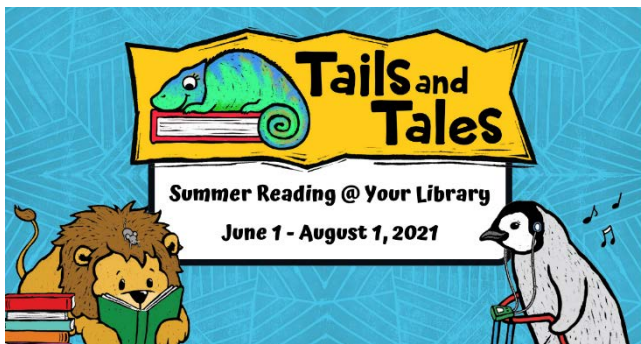


Figure 4: Social media graphics



In order to provide participating systems with additional marketing support, MCLD also launched a new opportunity called the Summer Reading Advertising Pool. This optional support allowed systems to buy into in a large-scale advertising campaign that was managed by the MCLD Communications Team. This gave systems access to a dedicated marketing staff who researched, implemented, and analyzed digital and social campaigns on their behalf. There were varying levels of investment for participation, and three library systems participated in 2021: Buckeye, Mesa and Tempe Public Libraries.

Separate from the Advertising Pool, MCLD also launched an independent advertising campaign featuring a mix of digital, print and radio advertising. The results of the campaign were successful with highlights being:

- The digital elements of the campaign brought 20,000 people to [MaricopaCountyReads.org](https://www.maricopacountyreads.org), with 82% being new visitors to the site
- Nearly 1,000 Secret Codes were redeemed from advertisements, including 555 from codes placed in print newspaper advertisements

- PeachJar flyers were sent to 106 schools in 7 school districts, resulting in nearly 1,600 visits to MaricopaCountyReads.org

Software

The summer reading software has continued to evolve and improve to address the changing needs of Maricopa County Reads. Many of the improvements for the 2021 reading program happened in offstage areas that staff use to manage the program.

- Administration and management improvements span many areas: systems and branches, schools and districts, daily images, social cards, vendor codes, packing slips, streaming programs, and roles.
- We improved functionality and accessibility for the public side of the site to improve interactions with JavaScript, continue to keep the site as functional as possible for users without JavaScript, and improve accessibility to keep the application usable by as many people as possible.

The latest revision of the summer reading software along with documentation and access to the development team are available at the [Great Reading Adventure project page](#).

Game Content

The dashboard is the first thing our participants see when they log into our program. This is where their digital badges, personalized avatars and, for our youngest participants, early literacy tips live. Bilingual early literacy tips from Expect More Arizona and Smart Talk graphics from Read On Arizona populate on the game dashboard each day for anyone registered as a prereader (ages 0-4). To engage participants as soon as they log in to their account we continued our inclusion of web links to online literacy games, activities and storytelling. This year a new partner, Liberty Wildlife, provided short informational videos for the dashboard. Each week a new video was uploaded and featured an animal in their care; participants could enter the name of the animal as a secret code to earn a digital badge with the animal's picture on it.

Digital badges continued to be an integral part of the 2021 to mark program achievements (program registration, 500-point achievement, etc.) and to indicate the completion of in-game challenges many of which promote our community partners and community experiences. Badges provide added motivation and incentive for participants to continue logging reading points throughout the 9 weeks of the Summer Reading Program.

Avatars allow for personalized engagement in the online program. Avatar accessory bundles, such as animals (tails, ears, paws) and swimwear were unlocked throughout the program creating 3.6 septillion possible avatar combinations keeping participants engaged with new choices all summer. We strive for inclusivity in every aspect of our program so this year included the addition of 11 new hairstyles. The goal is that participants can see themselves reflected in their avatar.



Figure 5: New avatar hairstyles in 2021

Challenges

Challenges are a way for participants to earn bonus points by completing themed reading lists or a mix of reading books and completing activities. This year library staff and partners, such as the Board of Supervisors and Maricopa County’s Environmental Services created 211 diverse engagement activities with a total of 21,927 participant completions.

Challenges	Created by	Description	Participants
#FirstChapterFridays	MCLD’s Goodyear	Looking for your next read? We're reading the first chapters of our favorite books EVERY Friday	1,070
Read about animals	Scottsdale Civic Center	Our theme this year is Tails and Tales so let's read about animals!	823
#BookLover Classics Edition	MCLD’s Fountain Hills	Read or listen to 2 of the popular classic titles from this collection of top authors and books!	644
Animals of Arizona! /Animales de Arizona!	MCLD’s Fountain Hills	Discover some of the amazing creatures that call Arizona home!	632
Dinosaur Challenge	Tempe	Complete 3 of these dino-themed tasks!	577
Arizona Pets	Mesa- Red Mountain	Complete 3 pet themed tasks to earn bonus points	523
Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Kids' Challenge	Maricopa County Parks and Rec	Complete Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department’s Summer Reading Challenge.	518
Chalk Your Walk	MCLD’s Administration	Get outside and create chalk art in your driveway or sidewalk!	499
Comical Creatures	MCLD’s Sun City	Do you like funny books? You'll be all set with this list of funny graphic novels with animals in them	493
Harkins Summer Movie Fun Challenge	Harkins Theatres	Escape the heat with these fun summer movies at Harkins! Find a sneak peak of the movies in your challenge tasks	432

Figure 6: Top 10 Challenges

Community Experiences

A community experience is a special summer reading event that takes place outside the library at an external space or organization. Community Experiences build community and provide participants with the experiential knowledge, a key component of literacy. Staff from all participating libraries collaborated with community partners to create secret codes that participants found and redeemed for a digital badge and bonus points. With most organizations reopening their doors to customers this summer, staff reestablished community relationships and created 109 community experiences, visited 5,343 times for the 2021 Summer Reading Program.

Experience	Location	Description	Participants
1970's Heart	Goodyear	There are 10 hearts located in Goodyear painted by Valley artists, and each heart represents a decade of the city's history and its future.	612
Friends of Gilbert Libraries Book Store	Gilbert	Visit the Southeast Regional Library and check out the Friends of the Gilbert Libraries Book Store. The non-profit bookstore is located in the lobby of the building and sells used books, videos, puzzles and more. All proceeds benefit the Gilbert libraries and other community literacy efforts.	255
Phoenix Zoo	Phoenix	Visit the Phoenix Zoo and cross the turtle bridge!	214
Taste of Italy	Goodyear	Visit Taste of Italy and find their secret code.	193
Irish Cultural Center	Phoenix	Escape the heat this summer by visiting the Irish Cultural Center & McClelland Library. During their visit guests will learn about the famous Book of Kells in the library, take a turn around our beautiful Clos, step back in time at our Irish cottage, and learn all about Irish Culture and History	193
Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Center	Queen Creek	Did you know there is a Community Arena that is available for public use at Horseshoe Park & Equestrian Centre? Learn more by visiting the Community Arena page.	172
Perry Pool	Gilbert	Visit the Town of Gilbert Perry pool.	126
Greenfield Pool	Gilbert	Visit the Town of Gilbert Greenfield Pool.	125
Elevate Trampoline Park	Goodyear	Find the secret code hidden inside Goodyear's Elevate Trampoline Park.	112
Southeast Regional Library Rotating Art Exhibit	Gilbert	Visit the Southeast Regional Library and check out the rotating art exhibit showcasing artists, promoting awareness and fostering education regarding art in the surrounding community.	110

Figure 7: Top 10 Community Experiences

Events

With the success of the virtual streaming events available in the Summer Reading Software last year and the uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic, MCLD decided to repeat a virtual only format this summer for all performers. Each week 4 new programs, 3 English and 1 Spanish or bilingual, became available to all summer reading participants. We also worked with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter who provided ASL interpretations for programming provided by Liberty Wildlife, a nonprofit rescue, rehabilitation, and education center and Phoenix Herpetological Society, the largest reptile sanctuary in the US; each ran for one month. These 34 programs received 12,325 views over the nine weeks of the program and included secret codes to earn point and digital badges for watching.

2021 Most Viewed Programs

Liberty Wildlife with ASL interpretation

Great Arizona Puppet Theater

Phoenix Art Museum: Art Speaks!

As You Wish Painting

Blues Music History

Jungle Jill's Animal Encounters

Juggling with James Reid

Marshall Shore's AZ Trivia

Desert Botanical Garden: Desert Defenders

Radical Reptile Fun

Top Spanish/bilingual program: Ballet Folklórico Quetzalli



Figure 8: Most viewed streaming events

Sponsors and Incentives

Outside organizations support the reading program by donating incentives participants earn as they reach point milestones or win in drawings. Peter Piper Pizza, Raising Cane’s and Rubio’s Coastal Grill donated free food coupons for 500 point achievers. Coordinated through the Arizona State Library, Arizona State Parks & Trails donated one-day park passes for 750-point achievers while the Phoenix Mercury provided up to four (4) free tickets to one game June-September. Grand prize drawings conducted at the end of the program for all 1,000-point achievers included:

- Harkins Theatres prize packs, which include loyalty cups, admission passes and free popcorn – one for a winner at each participating library. In addition to the prize packs they donated an additional 6,000 loyalty cups, libraries determined how these would be distributed.
- Legoland Discover Center admission passes
- Sea Life Aquarium admission passes



Figure 9: Summer Reading Sponsor logos

MCLD provided kids Phoenix Zoo bundle drawing prizes, with a variety of animal themed books and educational toys, for each library system to create drawings as they saw fit. MCLD participants who logged at least 140 points a week were entered into weekly prize drawings. Pre-readers and kids could win a Phoenix Zoo bundle. Teens could choose from curated themed bundles from Samurai Comics such as Marvel, Magic the Gathering or Star Wars. Adults could choose a curated themed bundle such as Arizona Love or the Book Lover from Changing Hands bookstore.²



Figure 10: Logos for drawing prize organizations

² Each library system offer drawing prizes and additional incentives for their participants only

Free Book Incentive

One of our objectives every year is to build home libraries so the Summer Reading Program offers participants who achieve 1,000 points their choice of book from over 120 titles. These choices include options for all ages ranging from board books to teen and adult fiction and nonfiction and several activity books. Over 18,500 participants, or 80% of achievers, chose a title from this year's selection. We continued our partnership with Maricopa County Human Services Department so achievers could donate their book to a child enrolled in a Head Start classroom instead; 5% of achievers donated totaling 1247 books, enough for every child enrolled to take a book home.

Maricopa County also supported the Durango Juvenile Detention Center's program by purchasing a bulk order of titles for kids 10 and up. These books went directly to the facility so that kids who reached 1,000 points could choose a book right away; 67 kids completed the program and chose a free book.

2021 Top Ordered Prize Book Titles

Fix it and Forget It- cookbook

Weird but True

Scholastic Book of World Records

Draw Kawaii Cute Mythical Creatures

One Colorful World Color and Activity Book

The Winglets Quartet

Pete the Cat and the Treasure Map

Pokémon Awesome Evolutions

Disney Frozen 2 Magical Sticker Book

Snuggle Up, Pups –board book

Top Spanish Title- *We Love You, Mr. Panda/*
Te amamos, Sr. Panda-board book

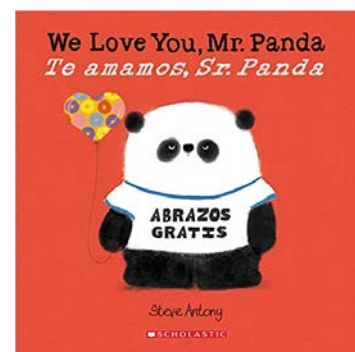
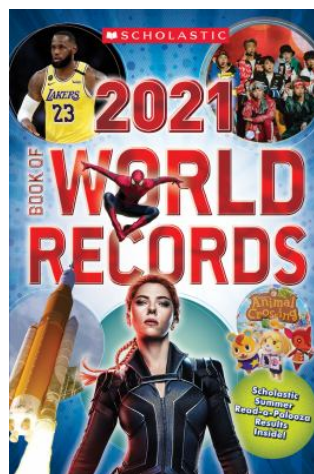
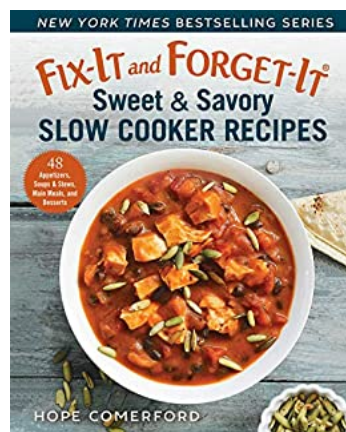


Figure 11: Top ordered prize books

Public Surveys

Each year we invite participants to complete a survey about their experience with the Summer Reading Program to help us identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program and if met our goals and objectives. This year 2,707 participants filled out our survey upon their completion of the program. This breaks down to 618 kids, 439 teens, 1,026 adults and 624 adults answering on behalf of their child or teen. Many of the questions remained the same; we kept the questions posed by the Arizona State Library including how the library continues to support families during the COVID-19 pandemic, feedback on virtual programming and added one about prize pick up since it has changed since 2019.

Survey results include the following:

- 87% of respondents learned something new from what they read or experienced.
- 84% of respondents enjoy reading more (a 5% jump from last year).
- 84% of respondents read more often.
- 82% of respondents want to use the library resources more often.
- 83% of respondents maintained or increased their reading.
- 95% of respondents felt prize pick up was simple.
- 93% of respondents have a library card.
- 99% of respondents plan to participate next year.

The optional free response results were helpful and will inform next year's goals and objectives as well as help adjust the functionality of the program. Even though customers are anxious to get back to in-person programming, most also expressed thanks for meeting their needs in other ways. Our curbside pick-up, though not exclusively a summer reading feature, was a way we connected to customers last year and continues to be a vital service in reaching summer reading participants. Parents and caregivers shared that the Summer Reading Program created a way for them to connect to their children, forming a bond and creating a reading routine in their home with the shared goal of reading 20 minutes a day.

Summary

The 2021 Summer Reading Program was another year of uncertainty as we made early decisions about programming, prize distribution, and reestablished relationships with our community partners. With our doors open an additional 20,000 participants registered for our program and our achiever rate, a focus in capturing statistics, was 46% showing continued engagement. We will look to maintain the rate of achievement while gaining more participants overall in 2022 by implementing some new objectives and strategies to interrupt the summer slide even after participants reach their 1,000 point milestone.

The majority of programming created by staff and community organizations were still virtual this year and though customers are eager to get back to in person programming participants engaged online viewing our programs, completing challenges and entering secret codes. When we return to in person programming we will continue to offer online programs and performances which address accessibility issues by providing closed captioning, Spanish/bilingual options and American Sign Language options.

Plans for the 2022 Summer Reading Program include tweaks to the user interface and better communication with participants to improve the user experience, additional training options for the different types of learners on staff and continued efforts to increase diversity of content in every aspect of the online format and software. We strive to get back to our pre pandemic participant numbers and achiever rate by reaching not only our regular library users but also non-readers or non-library users who we hope will form a library habit after participating in the summer reading program.

Acknowledgments

The Summer Reading Program is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Maricopa County Library District staff, participating libraries, and community partners. We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for making the 2021 program a success.

Maricopa County Library District

Director

Jeremy Reeder

Deputy Director

Erin MacFarlane

Branch Operations

Danette Barton

Library Region Managers

Collection Management

Laura Jamison

Amy Cimino

Tracey Hoyos

Tara Summus

Michael Porter

Facilities

Brigitte Demmel

Justin Franks

Finance

John Werbach

Mary Carson

Bob Mungovan

Emily LaFragola

Information Technology Team

Library District Branch Staff

Marketing and Public Relations

Samantha Mears

Lucas Gonzalez

Rob Scott

Services Team

Lindsey Powers

Jolene Bradley

Jacqueline Jeffrey

Jennifer Brown

Virtual Branch

Lena Sherman

Marissa Beckett

Corban Ford

Yvonne Trotta

Web Team

Matt Miller

Harald Nagel

Daniel Wilcox

Madi Boman

Participating Libraries

Avondale Public Library

Marisela Munoz
Brenda Soto

Buckeye Public Library

Peter Grant
Janene Van Leeuwen
Jana White

Chandler Public Library

Jill Baker
Jean Reynolds
Jennifer Whitt

Desert Foothills

Caitlin Decker
Ashley Ware

Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Tribal Library

Jacquelyn McCalvin

Glendale Public Library

Erin Garred
Elizabeth Garcia

Luke Air Force Base

Jennifer Crowell
Kathryn Puckett

Maricopa County Durango Juvenile Detention Center

Cipriana Rosales
Linda Christian
Kevin Malakowsky

Maricopa County Sherriff's Department

Lisa Poulin

Mesa Public Library

Brenna Klassen
Michele Sheppard
Anna Chenoweth

Peoria Public Library

Kathie Jackson
Sarah Dudley

Phoenix Public Library

Gretchen Pierce
Wendy Resnik

Salt River Tribal Library

Melissa Rave Karria
Silver Latiesha Guy
Sophenia Begaye

Scottsdale Public Library

Heather Sollom-Smith
Michelle Vorves-Cabrales
Alisha Hasson

Tempe Public Library

Samantha Seeman

Tolleson Public Library

Lila Garza

Youngtown Public Library

Heidi Speed
Tris Steward
Cathy Grow

Wickenburg Public Library

Jane Baumbach
Suzie Wolfe

Maricopa County Partners

Maricopa County Supervisors

Jack Sellers, District 1

Steve Chucri, District 2

Bill Gates, District 3

Clint Hickman, District 4

Steve Gallardo, Chairman, District 5

Maricopa County Human Services

Department

Nancy Kessay

Maricopa County Parks and Recreation

Donna Southard

Maricopa County Departments

Sheriff Paul Penzone Office of
Communications

Partner Organizations

Arizona State Library

Donna Throckmorton

Arizona State Parks & Trails

Ken "Gecko" Sliwa

Harkins Theatres

Alison Sipes

Legoland Discovery Center/Sea Life Aquarium

Rebecca Crain

Peter Piper Pizza

Lee Rosenthal

Phoenix Mercury

Vince Kozar

Holly Mercier

Raising Cane's

Danielle Mann

Brittany Maroney

Rubio's Coastal Grill

Lauren Sassano

Expect More AZ

Read On Arizona

Terri Clark