

Surprising Programs Offered by the Library

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When most people think about the public library, their thoughts are usually centered around the idea of books and research, but today's Volusia County library is so much more.

There are two community service programs that the library offers, that most people are completely unaware of. The Pedal Forward Project and the Summer Break Spot Program.

The Pedal Forward Project is a new concept for Volusia County's Social Workers in Libraries program; enhancing it by offering tangible support to program participants who have demonstrated determination and resiliency for reentering the workforce but identify reliable transportation as an obstacle in finding or maintaining newly found jobs.

Specifically, connecting participants with refurbished bicycles allows them a greater sense of self-reliance and independence, and affords them a wider search area for employment. The program also grants them greater flexibility for shift availability when not tethered to fixed bus routes, diminishes tardiness with established jobs, minimizes weather exposure via shorter travel times, improves the stamina necessary to maintain heavy work schedules for more labor-intensive jobs, and diminishes the Community's waste footprint by keeping usable bicycles out of local landfills.

The NEFLIN (Northeast Florida Library Information Network) Board of Directors has selected the Volusia County Public Library (VCPL) as the winner of the 2024 Innovation Award for their Pedal Forward Project.

The first set of bicycles to support the program came from the Volusia County Sheriff's Foundation, the second batch came from VOTRAN, one of the current sources of bikes is the New Smyrna Beach Presbyterian Church Bicycle Ministry which has donated the last 11 bikes, already repaired and ready to go.

VCPL accepted the award at the NEFLIN Annual Meeting on Friday, September 13, at the UNF Conference Center in Jacksonville.

The Summer Break Spot Program ended on August 9th, the first day of school for most Volusia County students. This program offered students 18 and under available meals at the 14 library branch locations during the summer break period. Students were required to come to the library branch and consume the meals on the premises. The purpose of this program is to provide nutritious meals to the students who otherwise may go without due to the lack of a school lunch program.

“So many students who depend on their school lunch program to eat, go without a proper diet of meats and vegetables during the summer due to lack of financial support or guardians who choose not to provide meals for the children. Kids need to eat more than once every couple of days. When I was a student, I had breakfast, then a mid-morning snack, then lunch, then a mid-afternoon snack, then dinner. These meals were smaller in size than most meals offered today, but the metabolism of a child or adolescent is running constantly and needs fuel. Without the proper nourishment, kids can’t think as well,” said Barry KuKes, Marketing Specialist with Volusia County Public Library.

The library offers many more programs and services that most people had no idea existed. Next time you are wondering what to do with your time, stop in at your local Volusia County Library Branch and discover a whole new world of learning, education, and resources.