

## **Volusia County Public Library is More than You Think**

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The Volusia County Public Library (VCPL) is extremely community-driven. Yes, it offers books, movies, audiobooks, research computers, conference rooms, online databases, magazines, newspapers, and much more, but it also helps hundreds of Volusia County residents in other ways as well.

The mission of the VCPL is “To provide citizens and visitors with exceptional library services that facilitate personal growth, economic development, and quality of life in a manner that strengthens community pride while fostering a countywide identity and partnerships.”

Just recently, The NEFLIN (Northeast Florida Library Information Network) Board of Directors selected the Volusia County Public Library (VCPL) as the winner of the 2024 Innovation Award for their Pedal Forward Project. What is the Pedal Forward Project you might ask?

Melissa Reynolds, Assistant Director of VCPL said, “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.”

Another way the library helps our community is with the Summer Break Spot program, which provides nutritious meals at no cost to children 18 and under while school is out for the summer. Kids enjoy breakfast, lunch, and/or snacks all summer long. Meals were available at 12 out of the 14 Volusia County library branches. This program ends once school resumes on August 10 2024, but is scheduled to return next summer.

The VCPL also offers The Social Worker in the Libraries program which is designed to help people identify the appropriate agency, service, and how to apply for assistance. Social workers travel among Volusia County's public libraries to meet individually with residents to identify their specific needs and guide them to the appropriate agency.

A resident is encouraged to meet with a social worker, regardless of their need, to identify potential resources. Information and referrals may be generated for, including but not limited to, the following areas: Food/ SNAP/ WIC, Housing Information, Employment, Health Insurance, Legal, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health. If you or someone you know needs a social worker, appointments may be scheduled online at <https://volusialibrary.libcal.com/appointments>, or at your local VCPL.

If the internet connection or availability is limited for a resident, they can check out a hot spot that will allow them to connect to use online services. A hotspot is a wireless access point that lets you connect phones, tablets, computers, and other devices to the internet when you’re on the go or out of reach of a strong Wi-Fi signal. They’re built into most smartphones, but you can also get dedicated mobile hotspot

devices that deliver faster speeds, connect more devices, and have a longer battery life than your phone.

VCPL also offers resident classes for cover letter & resume assistance, Internet access for job searches and completing applications, Email account set-up assistance, VCPL database assistance, Some eLabs (or lab times) may include assistance using the library's digital services on laptops and tablets.

Today's Volusia County Public Library is so much more than just a place to borrow a book.

If you don't have a library card, visit one of the 14 library branches nearest you. It only takes a few minutes and there is no cost for the card. To find a branch location, visit [www.volusialibrary.org](http://www.volusialibrary.org)

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Recipient of a bike from the Pedal Forward Project.