

## **Jingles 'n' Gingerbread 2021**

Over 200 people turned out for Murrysville Community Library's Jingles 'n' Gingerbread open house. Monday, December 6, marked the first time the library had held the holiday gathering since 2019. This year local families enjoyed a string quartet, an introduction to American Sign Language, and a food truck serving cookies and hot chocolate. Adults crafted ornaments and picked up recipe cards. Children decorated paper gingerbread men and tried their luck at a candy cane ring toss.

Attendees remarked that they especially appreciated the quality and variety of children's activities. One mother noted that her daughter enjoyed the Newlonsburg Academy's closing clarinet performance so much that she made a rare exception and allowed her daughter to stay up past her bedtime. Other children jumped at the chance to play holiday games, build their own story wheels, and hear the same academy's flute group.

Similar student musical performances throughout the night, from a Franklin Regional string ensemble and the Broadway-inspired East End Kids, both entertained younger children and showcased to them the type of artistic achievement attainable through dedication and practice. Additionally, these student performances allowed young people to show their even younger peers the value of community engagement.

The library holds these open house events precisely to offer multiple generations the chance to come together and strengthen the community's ties. In a more focused way, the library's regular events allow community members to accomplish this goal every week. Just a few days after Jingles 'n' Gingerbread, local middle and high school students gathered at the library for a teen holiday book exchange. A few days after that, philosophically minded adults met for their monthly Socrates Café discussion group.

The first months of the new year will feature the same community-oriented programming plus a few new additions, including an opportunity for elementary students to experiment with mechanics and robotics. Where these regular events allow specific groups of people to participate in sustained enrichment activities throughout the year, the open house offers a larger group of people the chance to sample the library's offerings over a few hours.

Through careful attention to health safety protocols, the library could bring this larger group into its building for a pleasant holiday evening. Library Director Amy Riegner noted that all of the patrons she spoke with found the event welcoming and fun. In the months to come, library staff will continue these community building programs and hopes to get everyone to bed on time.

Evan Hrobak

Volunteer Services and Programming Librarian

Murrysville Community Library

Murrysville, PA 15668