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## **Grants Enable Special Programming**

Public Libraries depend on grants from various sources to provide special programming and service upgrades implemented for your benefit. These grant offerings are mostly invisible to you as patrons; they are entirely invisible in the event of a sad rejection. So let me tell you about three such grant opportunities that had deadlines for end-of-year 2021 into early 2022.

The first came from the PA Department of Labor and Industry and was entitled as the “Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grant – Round 2.” It was “focused on supporting effective programs that enhance foundational digital literacy skills for job seekers in their local community.” Maximum grant award is \$45,000.

It may be that the target audience was meant to be young adults and older adults seeking immediate mobility in the workforce, but what is more foundational than developing digital skills in the youngest of Library patrons, preK through grade 8, who also happen to be among the most frequent users of Library services? Some WLN Libraries are already actively promoting digital literacy with PreK-2 StoryTime STEM-packs™, about which I have written numerous times, especially using Bee-Bot robots. So, it was natural that the Greensburg Hempfield Area and Delmont Public Libraries collaborated in a 2021 application on this basis, and added use of Sphero robots for grades 3-8.

The second opportunity came from the American Library Association, with an award amount of \$2,500 for each of three applicants that were to be chosen. It is called the Peggy Barber Tribute Grant. “Each year, the grant will focus on supporting a specific type of library programming. For the 2021–2022 cycle, libraries are invited to submit applications for a grant to support humanities-based programming.” That is so core to public Libraries, and Delmont Public Library submitted a unique and exciting proposal.

Lastly, the United Way of Southwestern PA offered up to \$25,000 for grant proposals that: (1) meet basic individual/family needs in time of crisis; (2) connect people to meaningful employment and encourage career development; or (3) help students of all ages achieve academic and social growth. Although the argument can be easily made that Libraries serve all these needs, it is the achievement of academic and social growth that is most apt if one has to choose just one category. The two collaborators for the digital literacy case above submitted a proposal that combined the essence of the first two applications.

At this writing, awards have been announced in all three cases, and I am pleased to be able to congratulate the two Library partners on their received grants from both the PA Department of Labor and Industry and the United Way of Southwestern PA. The first is entitled “STEM Career Ramps @ Public Libraries”; the second is entitled “Early Career Ramps @ Public Libraries.” As the titles suggest, they very much have overlapping

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purposes. The scope of them should give you some idea about the kind of grant opportunities that are being offered in our region. The emphasis is often on STEM, particularly digital technologies, and career development.

So, if you are a parent of a young child, look now for the programs to be offered under these two grants, beginning with this summer. You are being offered a special opportunity.

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