

Published in the Penn-Franklin News on February 10, 2021.

Meet Ms. Becky II

Last week, I introduced myself as the newest staff member at Murrysville Community Library and spoke with a focus on preschoolers and their use of libraries. This time I want to speak with a focus on in-schoolers.

When school is out of session, the library is a popular destination for school-age children, at least the younger ones, and plays a key role in the prevention of what is known as the “summer slide.” Also known as summer learning loss, the summer slide is a decline in children’s reading ability and other academic skills that can occur over the summer months when school isn’t in session. Participation in any summer library program is perhaps the easiest way to prevent this.

Ranging from basic reading challenges to more robust events and classes, youth programming over the summer months is often increased to meet our patrons’ out-of-school needs. For many librarians, including myself, this is not only the busiest time of year, but the most fun. For 2021, I look forward to connecting with area educational partners, teachers and other administrative professionals, to develop youth programming for the summer that will inspire new ideas and build on opportunities already offered.

As you may already know, every summer at the library introduces a new theme on the part of the Collaborative Summer Library Program, a nonprofit, charitable organization that supports literacy, education and science through summer reading events in public libraries across the United States. This year’s theme is “Tails and Tales,” and it is sure to include many activities incorporating animals and literacy. I welcome hearing from parents, caregivers, and teachers on how the library can make this a successful program for your children and students. I also look forward to connecting more with local agencies and businesses to partner and continue to provide educational and recreational outlets for community youth.

The summer of 2020 proved that libraries have been able to ensure library access whether through a virtual capacity or socially distanced services. This was done by many libraries through the use of Beanstack, a special software and app service that makes it easy for patrons to register, track reading, and earn incentives. Beanstack is still being used by libraries, including Murrysville Community Library, and families can look forward to engaging in more unique ways with the service this summer. Whether typical in-person programs will look the same is still to be determined, but with many outdoor spaces available for use, it is my high hope that some level of physical connection can still be achieved in a safe manner.

Until the arrival of summer, I encourage you to check out the Murrysville Community Library website (www.murrysvillelibrary.org) and Facebook page for information on upcoming events and services for school-age children. Each month the library will be hosting “Take & Make” activity kits for children that incorporate literacy and critical thinking skills that are also a fun diversion from screen time. I also recommend checking

Published in the Penn-Franklin News on February 10, 2021.

out some of the digital resources available for students, all free with a library card, through POWER Kids by visiting www.powerlibrary.org. POWER Kids is a version of POWER Library, Pennsylvania's Electronic Library, designed for young learners and teachers too. Here, students can chat with an experienced librarian, always on hand to answer any research or school-related questions, as well as search for digital materials and the various educational databases, such as Scholastic's BookFlix, and TrueFlix.

Though I can proudly display the document to prove my graduate-level studies of Library and Information Science, it is the connections I have made with families in libraries, along with other exemplary librarian mentors, that have been the most vital source of my education to this day. In this service-oriented profession, I aim to serve you as a member of the community, and I invite you to let me know (rebecca.martinazzi@wlnonline.org) what it is that you value and how I can help to create opportunities to enrich your and your children's lives. Through doing this and through the power of our libraries, I truly believe we can continue to build a strong, literate, and informed community.

Becky Martinazzi
Coordinator of Youth Services
Murrysville Community Library
rebecca.martinazzi@wlnonline.org
(724) 327-1102, Ext. 148