



Celebrating 13 New Little Free Libraries in Winchester

The Winchester Campaign for Grade Level Reading celebrated a long-term project completion with 13 new Little Free Libraries in different locations in local parks. In early March, The Winchester Star reported on its success by saying, "although little libraries have been around for decades, Winchester Little Libraries officially started with a pandemic-inspired project in Athena Michaels' neighborhood. Spearheaded by Michaels, a little library was installed at the intersection of Woodland and Frederick avenues in September 2020 by Jaxson Neese, a local Boy Scout."

Winchester Little Libraries are also planned to be located in conjunction with Handley Regional Library System's local StoryWalks.

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Our Mission and Goals

Grade-Level Proficiency

Winchester's overarching vision is to increase the percentage of 3rd graders reading at or above the proficient level **to at least 75%** by 2032 based on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) ELA assessment. We will achieve this mission by setting goals focusing on:

- **School Readiness**

- Increase the number of children ready for kindergarten **to at least 80%** based on their performance on the PALS-K. Focus will be on further developing high-quality preschool and daycare programs and offering families out-of-school options to further learning and growth.

- **School Attendance**

- Reduce chronic absenteeism **to rates at or below 10%** among K-4th graders at all four elementary schools by 2025.

- **Summer and Afterschool Learning**

- **Increase by 100%** the number of K-4th grade students who have access to summer and afterschool opportunities that focus on literacy-related learning and enrichment.



Have you seen our new billboards in Winchester? Two colorful billboards will rotate every few months in and around the city spreading the message of lifelong literacy.

Spotlight On:



Healthy Families of the Northern Shenandoah Valley

As a Campaign partner, Healthy Families (HFNSV) is doing integral work to prepare our community's children to be successful by starting prenatally with parents. Over the past few months, these are the updates that we are celebrating:

- The Parent Education series has been rebranded in partnership with Handley Library as **Parent Chat & Playdates** where HFNSV staff present a monthly theme.
- A **new Birth-5 Community Roundtable Group** is being led by HFNSV as broad effort to build sustainable early childhood support in Winchester.

25 Years of Building Healthy Families

As featured in The Winchester Star

Not everyone is born with a maternal or paternal instinct. Some parents simply aren't mentally equipped to raise a child, perhaps because they are victims of abuse, struggling with addiction, the products of troubled families or too young to properly care for a baby.

Twenty-five years ago, three Winchester women recognized that poor parenting is a generational issue because children who lack proper parenting often grow up to become bad parents themselves. Rather than sitting back and ignoring the problem, these women created Healthy Families Northern Shenandoah Valley (NSV). The nonprofit's mission is to teach new parents in Frederick, Warren and Clarke counties and the city of Winchester how to properly raise a child. It offers positive encouragement to clients and never judges parents for their personal circumstances.

Sara Schnoover-Martin is now the Executive Director and says Healthy Families NSV now serves an average of 200 families per year and has grown its staff to 14 employees.



Can you help? Through the Campaign, this project is seeking special funds to fully launch it long-term.

- **Kid Lit Kits:** from Healthy Families NSV and Handley Library comes a combined kit that grows with children ages birth-3 and ages 4-5 where sponsors are needed. Kits include materials that support both the caregiver and the child in building strong connections to establish key early care and literacy skills. By participating in partner programs, families would receive a free kit, which will help to set a sustainable pathway for strong readers who are school ready.
 - **What We Need:** \$10K/year for 100 kits or \$100 per child's kit

Our Needs Looking Ahead

If you would like to support this CGLR project, contact Andy Gail at agail@lvwa.org for more information.

Thoughts from the Field



Matt Peterson, Executive Director of John & Janice Wyatt Foundation

As daycare programs and preschools across the region begin to open registration for the fall, now is a good time to reemphasize the importance of early childhood development and education. No matter our background or place of birth, every parent or caregiver only wants the very best for their children. We want them to be happy and live long, fulfilling lives. At a minimum, I would argue we all want our kids to live comfortably and to not be compelled to choose between stable housing, health care, and food. Procuring a living wage job is an important vehicle for earning the money necessary to live that life.

After decades of research, highlighted by Annie E. Casey Foundation's Early Warning report, Harvard's studies on pediatric brain growth and pre-kindergarten value, and the Brookings Institute studies on school dropouts, we now have strong, predictive correlative data on the effects of early education vis a vis future success.

This success ladder begins with ensuring our children have the right dosage of nurturing, age-appropriate early interactions, beginning with prenatal care through age five. Kids who are chronically absent in middle and high school are seven times more likely to drop out. If they are not on level reading by third grade, they are 13 times more likely to drop out and four times more likely to not graduate on time. Thus, we know the third-grade reading indicator is critical to future success.

Our lower-income learners are many times one to two years behind their peers in reading by kindergarten and another one to two years behind by third grade resulting from compounding achievement gaps and summer learning loss. A child's ability to learn and make strong synaptic connections are strongest early on. A child's brain plasticity is at its greatest by age 5 and then begins to drop. Kids not ready by kindergarten start off behind and struggle to catch up. Many will fail to close the gaps and never reach their potential.

What does this all mean? We, as a community and as parents, need to be intentional and laser-focused on developing our children at the earliest ages. Parents are our kids' first teacher and thus we need to commit to four things:

- 1) Prioritize health.
- 2) Talk, read, play, and interact with our kids consistently and often.
- 3) Do not forget the importance of summer and learning loss avoidance.
- 4) Seek ways to access quality education before children enter kindergarten.

There are wonderful programs in our community, including public pre-K programs, Head Start, and other private center or home-based programs. I would encourage families to research options and register today for our children's tomorrow.

Congratulations to Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area 2022 Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit of the Year

With their work in Winchester as the backbone agency of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area (LVWA) has won the 2022 Nonprofit of the Year Award. The Top of Virginia Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes local businesses that exceed in amplifying their mission to promote business networking, advocacy, and community organization. Congratulations LVWA!



LVWA Staff: Andy Gail, Amanda Brumbaugh, Pam Lam (L to R)



Winchester
parks and recreation Virginia

2023 SUMMER ENRICHMENT EXPO

A ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR SUMMER
ACTIVITIES IN WINCHESTER AND
THE SURROUNDING AREA!
COME "SEE" THE OPPORTUNITIES!

 **THURSDAY
APRIL 20** **5-7 P.M.
REC CENTER** **FREE!**

DO YOU HAVE AN ORGANIZATION INTERESTED
IN PROMOTING CAMPS AND ACTIVITIES?
APPLY NOW!

Spread the Word!

Coming soon from Winchester Parks and Recreation Department and Winchester Public Schools is a new event for families. To prepare for the summer, local organizations who hold summer camps and events will be in one convenient place for caregivers to "shop around". Programs vary based on age, care, and cost. Contact Maggie McCambell-Lien for more information at maggie.lien@winchesterva.gov.

Coalition Partners

- The Baby Buzz
- Bright Futures
- Community Foundation of Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Handley Regional Library System
- Healthy Families of the Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Infant Toddler Connection
- John & Janice Wyatt Foundation
- Laurel Ridge Community College
- Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area
- Pediatric Associates of Winchester
- Peter Bullough Foundation
- Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum
- STARBASE Academy
- Summit Events Co.
- The Kids Club of Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Top of Virginia Regional Chamber
- United Way of the Northern Shenandoah Valley
- Valley Health
- Winchester Book Gallery
- Winchester Department of Social Services
- Winchester Public Schools
- Youth Development Center



Upcoming CGLR Events

APRIL



SUMMER ENRICHMENT EXPO
JIM BARNETT REC CENTER, 5 - 7 PM
AGES: FAMILY

MAY



PARENT CHAT & PLAYDATE: "EARLY LITERACY"
HANDLEY LIBRARY, 10:30 AM
AGES: CAREGIVERS WITH UNDER 5

JUNE, JULY,
& AUGUST



SUMMER MEAL DISTRIBUTION
VARIOUS DAYS & LOCATIONS, 10:00 AM
AGES: FAMILY

JULY



PROJECT CONNECT
VIRGINIA AVENUE ELEMENTARY, 8 AM - 2 PM
AGES: ADULTS