

OPEN+ Magazine, Spring 2025

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Register

Register for library programs at events.crlibrary.org/events or by calling (319) 261-7323. Events are subject to change.

Accessibility

Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a library program, service, or activity, should contact the library at (319) 261-7323 or email programming@crlibrary.org as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the program.

Special Hours

The Downtown and Ladd libraries will be closed April 20 and May 25-26.

From the Director

Spring is a time of new growth and new possibilities. This spring, in particular, we're excited about the continued growth of the Westside Library.

Construction on the new library has carried on throughout the winter, since the groundbreaking last October. The basement went in, footings were poured, and more. We're excited to see work continue as the weather warms up.

Even as we celebrate progress on the new library, we're focused on our mission of helping our community learn, enjoy, and thrive. Our Books by Mail program, which ensures access to library materials for homebound patrons, has expanded with the help of volunteers to include Books by Delivery, pairing social connections with the books. That's just one example of our efforts to serve older adults in our community, as you can read about in this issue.

We've also got a full slate of programs for all ages, from story times and books clubs to craft and game days, plus the return of the popular Cat Cafe. Teens are invited to join our new Youth Advisory Club, which will meet the first Friday of each month to help plan teen programs, sign up for library volunteer opportunities, build leadership skills,

and suggest teen books to be purchased by the library. And we hope you'll join us for the Maker Fest on March 19 to explore all the possibilities our Maker Spaces have to offer and try STEAM activities with many of our community partners.

As you register for programs this spring, you may notice our online calendar looks a little different. If you have any questions or difficulty using it, feel free to call us at (319) 261-7323, and a staff person will be happy to assist you. As always, we are your library.

- Dara Schmidt, Library Director



Children

LEGO & KEVA Plank Club

Construct and create with LEGO and KEVA blocks.

Mondays, March 3-May 5, 4:30-5:30 pm

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Early Learning Story Time

Join us for a fun-filled story time for children ages 2-5.

Mondays, March 3-May 19, 10-10:30 am

Ladd Library, Community Room

Tuesdays, March 4-May 13, 10-10:30 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Baby and Toddler Story Time

15-minute story and song program, followed by playtime.

Wednesdays, March 5-May 7, 9:30-10:30 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Fridays, March 7-May 16, 9:30-10:30 am

Ladd Library, Community Room

Sensory Story Time

This story time is designed for attendees with multi-sensory needs and includes low lights, reduced sounds, and opportunities for social interaction and play.

Thursdays, March 6-May 15, 10-10:30 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Expressive Arts with Tanager

From theatre games and clay sculptures to creative movement and ukulele songs, this program is about processing, feeling, and healing through the arts. Geared to pre-K to second graders.

Thursdays, March 6 & 27, April 3 & 17, & May 1 & 22, 10-11 am

Ladd Library, Community Room

Fridays, March 7 & 14, April 4 & 25, & May 2 & 23, 10-11 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Pied Piper

Join us for a concert presented by Orchestra Iowa, designed for preschoolers. March will feature a woodwind quintet and May will feature a brass quintet.

Fridays, March 14 & May 9, 9:30-10:15 & 10:30-11:15 am

Downtown Library, Whipple Auditorium

Saturday Story Time: Rainbows!

Celebrate all the colors of the rainbow with books, songs, rhymes, and art.

Saturday, March 15, 10-10:30 am

Ladd Library, Community Room

Drop-in Button Making

Join us at some point during the hour to make a new button for your collection! Materials will be provided to create your button, or you can bring paper from home.

Monday, March 20, 2-3 pm

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Monday, March 31, 2-3 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Read to Dogs

Trained, certified therapy dogs provide companionship to emerging readers as they earn a free library book and bookmark.

Thursdays, March 20, April 17, & May 15, 6:30-7:15 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Saturday Story Time: Spring

Welcome spring with stories and songs, and learn about pollinators from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Saturday, April 5, 10-10:30 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Drop-In Mini Pinch Pot

Use air dry clay to create your very own mini pinch pot.

Friday, April 18, 12:30-1:30 pm

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Monday, April 21, 2-3 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Saturday Story Time

Read stories, sing, dance, and play.

Saturday, April 19, 10-10:30 am

Ladd Library, Community Room

Superhero Story Time

Read stories, sing, and dance at our special story time.

Saturday, May 3, 10-11 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Superhero Day

Come dressed up and use your superpowers to complete fun challenges, activities, and crafts.

Saturday, May 3, 1-2 pm

Downtown Library, Beems and Whipple auditoriums

Saturday Story Time: Award-Worthy Picture Books

Join us for a story time featuring new picture books and vote for your favorites.

Saturday, May 17, 10-10:30 am

Ladd Library, Community Room

Make a Fairy Garden

Create a fairy garden with your family or friends. Build stone or wood structures, paint rocks and other decor, and plant or arrange greenery to make a cozy home. Limit one fairy garden per group. Designed for school-aged families. Registration required.

Saturday, May 17, 1:30-3 pm

Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium

Raptology: Iowa's Birds of Prey

Come to the library for a special program about raptors in Iowa! Raptology will bring some birds of prey and educate attendees about the birds' habitats, diet, and more!

Geared toward K-6th graders.

Saturday, May 24, 1-1:45 pm

Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium

Starstruck Story Time

Join us for a star and night sky-themed story time, with stories, songs, and an easy star activity.

Saturday, May 31, 10-11 am

Downtown Library, Children's Program Room

Teens

Teen 3D Print Club

Teens will learn how to use the 3D printer and how to use Tinkercad to create their own 3D designs.

Tuesdays, March 4 & 18, April 15, & May 6 & 20, 4-5 pm

Downtown Library, Technology Classroom

Youth Advisory Club

Youth ages 12-18 are invited to help plan teen programs, sign up for volunteer opportunities, build leadership skills, and suggest books to be purchased by the library.

Fridays, March 7, April 4, & May 2, 3:30-4:30 pm

Downtown Library, UnConference Room

School's Out: Crafts & Games

When school is out, come to the library! Teens and tweens ages 11-18 are invited to an hour of crafts, games, free books and more.

Friday, March 21, Monday, April 21, Friday, May 2, & Monday, May 12, 2:30-3:30 pm

Downtown Library, Union

DIY Disco Ball Decor

Create your own disco ball decor. Dye your disco decor or keep it classic – there are so many possibilities with this fun trend! Registration required.

Tuesday, April 15, 6-7 pm

Downtown Library, Beems B

Teens & Adults

Future Forward: Skills for Career Success

Craft an impactful resume, ace interviews, and network effectively. Attend 3 sessions to receive a \$25 gift card.

Mondays March 3-19, 11 am-noon & Wednesdays, March 5-May 28, 1-2 pm

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Craft Your Perfect Resume

Drop into the Opportunity Center to review basics ideas on how to present your knowledge, skills, and abilities in a professional way on a resume to capture the attention of potential employers.

Tuesdays, March 4-May 27, 9 am-noon

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Searching & Applying for Jobs Online

Learn about some of the best online resources for job searching, how to avoid scams, and the importance of monitoring your online presence.

Thursdays, March 6 & 20, April 3 & 17, & May 1, 15, & 29,
2:30-3:30 pm

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Tango Práctica

Learn the basic steps of tango and grow your skills in an encouraging, welcoming group. No partner required. Smooth-soled shoes recommended.

Thursdays, March 6-May 29, 6-7:30 pm

Downtown Library, Whipple Auditorium or Commons

Scrapbooking Club

Learn scrapbooking techniques including photo layout, page design, embellishment, and journaling. The library will provide decorative papers, stickers, ribbons, and stamps. Please bring your own book and photos.

Tuesdays, March 11, April 8, & May 13, 1-3 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

How to Impress at Your Job Interview

Practice common interview questions, improve your impromptu conversations skills, and talk about the “unwritten rules” of interviewing. Those who attend will earn a \$10 Goodwill voucher to shop for an interview-ready outfit.

Thursdays, March 13, April 10 & 24, & May 8 & 22, 2:30-3:30 pm

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Make Your Own Sourdough Starter

Learn how to make and maintain a sourdough starter, taste samples from Great Harvest Bread Co., and bring home recipes to try once your starter is ready to go.

Thursday, March 13, 6:30-7:30 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Corridor Games on Demand: Community Game Day

Bring your favorite indie role playing game to share or try a new game prepared by a group member.

Saturdays, March 29, April 26, & May 31, noon-4 pm

Downtown Library, Conference Room

Murder Mystery Club

Put on your detective hat and join other sleuths to solve a mystery at the library. Participants will work together to examine clues, read case files, and figure out whodunnit.

Tuesdays, April 1 & May 6, 6-7:30 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Bees and Blooms Watercolor Workshop

In this workshop, we focus on relaxation and fun with a bee and flower themed watercolor. Registration required.

Saturday, April 19, 1:30-3:30 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

The Art of Knolling

Knolling is the practice of arranging everyday objects artistically. A limited number of items will be supplied, from a choice of frames and decorative boards to a variety of trinkets, spring foliage, and small objects. Attendees should bring small items to add to their art piece.

Registration required.

Tuesday, April 22, 6-7 pm

Downtown Library, Beems B

House Plant Swap

Looking to trade houseplants that don't bring you joy anymore? Bring in your healthy plants or rooted cuttings for the library's semi-annual plant swap. Plant check-in is 1-1:30 pm, followed by the swap. After everyone with tickets has made their choices, leftover plants will be available to those without tickets.

Saturday, April 26, 1-2:30 pm

Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium

Craft a Book Wreath

Create a wreath out of old book pages.

Thursday, May 15, 11 am-12:30 pm

Downtown Library, Beems B

Adults

Computer Skills Training

Learn new computer skills or gain additional experience on current skills at this Opportunity Center workshop with IowaWORKS. Participants will earn a NorthStar Computer Literacy Certificate.

Mondays, March 3-May 19, 2:30-4:30 pm

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Sew a Table Runner: Basic Sewing Level

Create a simple yet lovely table runner for your home. If you can sew a straight line, you can make this table runner! Basic sewing skills required. These are two-part classes, and participants must be present at both classes to complete the project. Registration is required. Basic sewing skills can be covered in a one-on-one Maker appointment prior to attending the class. For availability, please visit CRLibrary.org/maker-spaces.

Tuesdays, March 4 & 11, 10 am-noon, & Saturdays,

March 8 & 15, 1-3 pm

Downtown Library, Maker Room

Financial Foundations with First Interstate Bank

Take charge of your financial future by attending free financial education classes with First Interstate Bank in the Opportunity Center. Topics include checking and savings accounts, loans, credit scores, and credit cards, budgeting, mobile and online banking, and more.

Wednesdays, March 5-12 & March 26-May 28, 3:30-4:30 pm

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

English Conversation Group

Are you learning English and looking to improve your communication skills and connect with others? Or maybe English is your first language, and you're interested in helping others learn and practice their language skills? Join an English Conversation Group. Friday discussions are general English practice, and Wednesday sessions focus on English for job readiness.

Job Readiness & English Conversation Group:

Wednesdays, March 5-May 28, 5-6 pm

English Conversation Group: Fridays, March 7-April 4, April 25-May 16, & May 30, 10-11 am

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Civil Rights Commission Community Office Hours

Chat with staff of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission about your concerns and questions.

Thursdays, March 6, April 3, May 1, 2-4 pm

Downtown Library, Commons

Searching & Applying for Jobs Online

Learn about some of the best online resources for job searching, how to avoid scams, and the importance of monitoring your online presence.

Thursdays, March 6 & 20, April 3 & 17, & May 1, 15, & 29,
2:30-3:30 pm

Ladd Library, Opportunity Center Classroom

Tai Chi for Older Adults

Learn and practice the gentle forms of Tai Chi in this series with Bryan Bruner of Heritage Area Agency on Aging. Skills will build on each other from the first session to the last.

Fridays, March 7-May 9, 10-11 am

Downtown Library, Beems B or Children's Program Room

Socially Anxious Hangout Group

Are you socially anxious, introverted, new in town, or just looking for an easy way to meet new people? Join us to play board games and have fun! For adults ages 18-40.

Saturdays, March 15, & April 5, 1-3 pm

Downtown Library, Conference Room

Social Games for Older Adults: Bingo

Join us for a free community game of Bingo. First come, first play, with all necessary materials provided.

Mondays, March 17, April 7 & 28, & May 19, 1-2 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Chair Yoga with Tammy Bayer of Toula Yoga

Chair yoga uses a chair for support with seated and standing postures to make yoga accessible.

Thursdays, March 13, April 10, & May 1, 1-2 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Thursdays, March 27, April 24, & May 22, 1-2 pm

Downtown Library, Beems A

Sew a Table Runner: Intermediate Sewing Level

Take your table runner skills to the next level! This project includes cutting fabric on angles and adding batting to the inside of the runner. Basic sewing skills required. This is a two-part class and participants must be present at both classes to complete the project. Registration is required. Basic sewing skills can be covered in a one-on-one Maker appointment prior to attending the class. For availability, please visit CRLibrary.org/maker-spaces.

Saturdays, March 29 & April 5, 1-3 pm & Tuesdays, April 1 & 8, 10 am-noon

Downtown Library, Maker Room

Seniors Create

Tap into your creativity and enjoy the calming benefits of painting! Join us for a fun and relaxing Paint by Numbers session hosted by Emery Place Senior Living. This program is designed for ages 55+. Reservations required.

Tuesdays, April 1 & May 6, 1-2 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Healthy, Easy Eating: Make a Meal with Aging Services
Unity Point Aging Services staff will explain the basics of healthy eating and provide a detailed demonstration on how to cook a Midwestern version of jerk chicken (not spicy!), coconut-lime rice, and no-bake chocolate pudding pie. Free blood-pressure screenings conducted by a licensed nurse will be available to each participant. Each participant will be able to assist in cooking with the help of Aging Services staff and will receive a portion of the meal.

Tuesday, April 22, 1-2pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Speed Friending

Join us for an afternoon of making new connections in a casual, low-pressure environment. We'll start with a lightning round where we rotate so you get to meet everyone. Then we'll have time to hang out, chat, play games, or make crafts with our new friends! For ages 18+. Registration recommended.

Thursday, April 24, 5:30-7:30 pm

Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium

Everyone

Songs, Stories, & Sock Puppets: Puppet Creation Workshop with Joe Link

Join us for an all-ages story time followed by a sock puppet creation workshop with local artist Joe Link. Learn the basics of puppeteering and bringing new life and character to socks. Puppet creation supplies will be provided.

Saturday, March 1, 10 am-noon
Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium

Dungeons & Dragons Gaming Club

Adventures await! Bring your Level 1, Fifth Edition character and be ready to dive into Dungeons & Dragons. All ages and experience levels welcome. We are also looking for Dungeon Masters to start tables.

Wednesdays, March 5 & 19, April 16, and May 7 & 21, 4-7
pm

Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium

Family Art Night

Explore different art materials and formats with the whole family.

Collages: March 5, Ladd Library & March 12, Downtown Library

Charcoal: April 16, Ladd Library & April 23, Downtown Library

Air Dry Clay: April 30, Ladd Library & May 7, Downtown Library

Watercolor: May 14, Ladd Library & May 21, Downtown Library

Soft Pastels: May 28, Ladd Library

Wednesdays, March 5-12 & April 16-May 28, 5-6 pm
Ladd Library, Community Room & Downtown Library,
Children's Program Room

Cedar Rapids Chess Club

Learn chess, advance your knowledge of the game, or teach others at this club for all ages. Visit chessiniowa.org for more information.

Wednesdays, March 5-May 28, 5:30-7:30 pm

Downtown Library, Beems Auditorium or Children's Program Room

Art Exploration: Spring

Create spring art in a variety of forms: chalk, poetry, beads, and more! All ages welcome.

Saturday, March 8, 10 am-noon

Downtown Library, Commons & Children's Program Room

Trading Card Game Club

Bring your favorite trading card games and join us for an afternoon of light, casual play. Magic: The Gathering and Pokemon take center stage, or bring your own favorite trading card game and meet with other players.

Wednesdays, March 12 & 26, April 9 & 23 and May 14 & 28, 4:30-6:30 pm

Downtown Library, Union

Civil Rights Commission Pop Up

Chat with staff from the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission about questions and concerns while doing an interactive activity to raise awareness.

Fridays, March 14, April 11, & May 9, 2-4 pm

Downtown Library, Commons

“The Wild Robot” Showing & Robot Activities

Enjoy the movie “The Wild Robot” and stay to learn how to use Spheros and Ozobots. Rated PG.

Saturday, March 22, 1-3:30 pm

Downtown Library, Whipple Auditorium

Gardening Series with Linn County Master Gardeners

April 2: Gentle Yoga for Gardeners with Diane Wiesenfeld

Gardening can cause wear and tear on the body, but simple yoga can help. You’ll receive instruction and participate in gentle movements with options to stand or sit in a chair. Diane Wiesenfeld is a Master Gardener and certified yoga teacher specializing in senior yoga.

April 9: Gardening Through a Nutritional Lens with Martha McClurg

Have you ever grown something in your vegetable patch because the seed catalogue was alluring and then wondered what on earth to do with the resulting produce? If so, this presentation is for you! Join registered dietitian and Master Gardener Martha McClurg for an informative talk on how to utilize unusual and excess produce from your garden. Participants will also gain an appreciation for the nutritional benefits these items provide.

April 16: Build a Bee Buffet with Angel Burns

Who doesn't like a good buffet? The 300-plus native species of bees in Iowa do. Learn about flowers, trees and shrubs you can add to your landscape, yard, or deck to attract these important pollinators. It is important to provide a variety of flowering plants throughout the growing season to make sure bees have the resources to complete their life cycles. We will also discuss other things you can add to your buffet to keep the bees happy and coming back for more.

April 23: Small Space Garden Planning with Kendal Hausmann

Planning your garden is exciting, but it's easy to get overwhelmed when you are limited to a smaller space. We'll talk about how to choose what to grow, using the entire season to your advantage, and creative ways to fit more in the space you have.

Wednesdays, April 2-23, 6:30-7:30 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library Big Spring Book Sale

Purchase new or gently used books and support the Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library and their work promoting literacy in our community.

Friday & Saturday, April 11 & 12, 9 am-5 pm, and Sunday, April 13, 1-5 pm

Downtown Library

Dungeons & Dragons Club Presents: How to Play

Learn the rules of the world's favorite tabletop role-playing game. Long time players learn how Fifth Edition has changed in 2024. Registration required.

Saturday, April 12, 1-4 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Maker Spaces Open House

Drop in to see what kinds of things can be made using our laser cutter, Cricut, 3D printers, and more.

Tuesday, April 29, 6-7 pm

Downtown Library, Technology Classroom & Maker Room

Exploring Wild Edibles

Linn County Conservation will lead an introduction to the many wild edibles that grow in our area, focusing on safety, identifying a few basic plants, and ethical harvest. Patrons will get recipe ideas and a chance to sample wild flavors and be able to create their own foraging journals.

Saturday, May 10, 1-2:30 pm

Downtown Library, Beems B

Book Clubs

Between the Covers Book Club

If you enjoy reading and good conversation in a relaxed atmosphere, this book group that meets the first Tuesday of each month is for you.

March 4: "Hello Beautiful" by Ann Napolitano

April 1: "James" by Percival Everett

May 6: "The Anxious Generation" by Jonathan Haidt

Tuesdays, March 4, April 1, & May 6, 10-11 am

Downtown Library, UnConference Room

Book Lovers Book Club

Newcomers are always welcome to this general interest book club that meets the second Tuesday of each month.

March 11: "The Four Winds" by Kristin Hannah

April 8: "Calypso" by David Sedaris

May 13: "Homegoing" by Yaa Gyasi

Tuesdays, March 11, April 8, & May 13, 6:30-7:30 pm

Ladd Library, Community Room

Explore the Maker Fest

Wednesday, March 19, 1-3 pm

Downtown Library

Drop into the Downtown Library for the second annual Maker Fest. This open house will feature an afternoon of hands-on, family-friendly STEAM activities, including a community art sculpture, circuit cards, button making, and more.

Watch the library's Glowforge and 3D printers in action, and visit the gallery to see what others have made.

Try science, technology, engineering, art, and math activities with our partners, including the Iowa Ceramics Center and Glass Studio, Collins Aerospace, 4-H, McKinley STEAM Academy, Tanager, Cedar Valley Makers, and more. Area robotics teams will do demonstrations, and participants can visit a fix-it cafe.

"The Maker Fest is a fun way for families to see how the library and other community members are part of the STEAM movement in preparing our community for the future," said Programming Librarian Jen Eilers.

Literary Libations

Mark your calendars for Literary Vines, the Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation's annual fundraiser featuring literature-inspired tasting tables, music, and entertainment.

The evening will feature tastings including selections of beer, wine, and nonalcoholic beverages paired with heavy appetizers.

Library staff will provide hands-on experiences in the Technology Classroom, where guests can learn about Foundation-funded technology programs and education.

All funds raised benefit the Library Foundation and Foundation-funded programs, including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Literary Vines attendees will also get to taste Library Lager, a special, limited-edition beer brewed in collaboration with Lion Bridge Brewing Company. The beer was crafted after the Library Foundation auctioned off a Brew Master for a Day experience in December. Library Lager will be released and available to purchase in April to coincide with National Library Week, April 6-12.

What: Literary Vines

When: Friday, April 18, 6-8:30 pm

Where: Downtown Library, 450 Fifth Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids

Tickets: \$60 at [CRLibrary.org/foundation/give](https://crlibrary.org/foundation/give)

Email Foundation@crlibrary.org or call (319) 739-0443 for more details.

Art on Exhibit this Spring

Robert Wagner

Cedar Rapids artist Robert Wagner, also known as Daedalus Vaughner, creates multi-disciplinary art with a focus on realism and representation.

Downtown, Third Floor Gallery

Maker Fest Exhibition

View art and artifacts created by our library's makers. Most of the items have been made by exclusively using equipment from our library's [Maker Spaces](#). Join us on March 19 for our Maker Fest to learn more, see the equipment in action, and see local makers at work.

Downtown, Skywalk Gallery

4-H Photography

Photography from local 4-H members, curated by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Images represent different perspectives and points of view, brought together in one place under the umbrella of 4-H.

Ladd Library, Gallery

Seeking Artists

Do you want to see your art on exhibit? Apply to display your work at the library! We are seeking artists to display work in our Downtown Library Third Floor Gallery, Downtown Library Skywalk Gallery, and Ladd Library Gallery, beginning in the summer and fall of 2025. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

The library also invites local artists to apply for the library's Artist-in-Residency program.

The selected artist, chosen by a committee, will work with library staff to provide creative art programming for library patrons and have their work exhibited in at least one library gallery space in the fall of 2025.

Local emerging artists, along with local post-secondary students, are encouraged to apply; the deadline to submit applications is Friday, April 4, 2025. A monthly stipend will be paid for the time and expertise of the selected artist.

More information on applying for both Art on Exhibit displays and Artist-in-Residence is available at CRLibrary.org/art-on-exhibit.

Services for Seniors

Ever since she was introduced to “Anne of Green Gables” at age 11, Carolyn Wilson has been hooked on reading. And even though she has trouble visiting the library these days due to health issues that limit her mobility, she read 150 books last year – thanks to the library’s Books by Delivery program.

Wilson made a career working in libraries, first in Hopkinton, then volunteering at the library in Fairfax and finally working at the Ely library. She returned to her childhood hometown of Cedar Rapids when she retired a few years ago, moving into her parents’ former home on the southwest side.

“I would go quite often to Ladd Library. But I just can’t do that now,” she said. “I was at Ladd with my cane one day and was putzing along pretty slowly, and a librarian there asked if I had ever heard of Books by Mail.”

Books by Mail is for patrons who are not able to visit the library because of a temporary or permanent disability. The program sends books, audiobooks, and DVDs directly to homebound patrons, either via mail or a new volunteer program, Books by Delivery.

With this expansion of the Books by Mail initiative, patrons are paired with a volunteer who brings books to them. That visit also provides an opportunity for conversation and social connection.

Expanding the Books by Mail program is just one way library staff are focused on serving seniors in the community. Other recent initiatives include outreach to bring programs to senior living facilities, as well as programs at the library aimed at older adults, including Chair Yoga, Tai Chi, Bingo, craft days, and book clubs. The library also has Reflections Kits available to borrow. They are designed for patrons with dementia or memory loss and their caregivers and loved ones and are meant to spark conversation and connection.

Most recently, the library was certified as a “Dementia Friendly Organization” by Dementia Friendly Iowa after staff underwent training to be “Dementia Friends.”

Dementia Friendly Iowa promotes change and education in communities to create a more welcoming, safe, and respectful space for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, at least 62,000 people are living with dementia in Iowa, and this number is expected to continue to increase as the population ages.

“Everyone is welcome at the library, and becoming Dementia Friendly Certified is one way we can make sure our library is accessible to all,” Cedar Rapids Public Library Director Dara Schmidt said. “We also want to make sure our staff have the tools and training they need to best serve all members of our community.”

Patron Services Specialist Michele Prostine coordinates the Books by Mail program, getting to know the patrons and selecting books she thinks they will like if they don't have specific titles in mind. She and Volunteer Coordinator Jessica Link also help pair volunteers with patrons for Books by Delivery.

Every other week, library volunteer Sue Graham-Cummings brings Wilson a stack of books. When Graham-Cummings arrives, they sit and chat, and sometimes a few hours have passed before they realize it, they said. That is a boon not just for Wilson, but for her as a volunteer, Graham-Cummings said. She also volunteers with the Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library.

“I just love being around people, and I love reading,” she said. “My mom took my older sister and I to the library from the first week we were out of the hospital. We went to church and the library. So, when I retired from teaching, I

started volunteering at the library, because I just needed my people fix.”

Wilson said, for her, the program has been a lifeline.

“Reading is kind of what saves me, because I’m pretty much house-bound now,” she said. “Reading takes you to all kinds of places. You can read about places you’re never get to go and situations you’ll never have to face.”

Learn about services for seniors at the library, including Books by Mail and Reflections Kits, at CRLibrary.org/seniors or by calling the library at [\(319\) 261-7323](tel:3192617323).

