

## **Middletown Public Library's Program Development Policy**

### **Purpose**

This Program Development Policy upholds the mission and goals of the Middletown Public Library by setting guidelines for the planning and operation of Library programs and events. It is also used to inform the public about standards and principles that are applied to the program selection and management process.

### **Library Mission Statement**

Middletown Public Library provides a safe and inclusive space that serves our community by providing free access to information, materials, and programs, both within and beyond our walls, delivered by a welcoming and knowledgeable staff.

### **Vision Statement**

Middletown Public Library strives to be the heart of the community by inspiring curiosity, connecting people, and enriching lives.

### **Community Statement**

The Middletown community is characterized by its multigenerational and ethnically diverse population. Decisions regarding library programs are made with an understanding of the dynamic and diverse nature of the community, enabling the Library to offer programs and events that reflect the community's evolving interests and needs.

### **Responsibility for Program Development**

The ultimate responsibility for program development rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board of Trustees. Program planning and facilitating is delegated to staff members based on their job responsibilities and areas of expertise. Programming staff are guided by this policy and utilize professional skills, collections, equipment, facilities, and feedback from the community in planning and delivering library programs.

### **Selection Guidelines and Objectives**

The Board of Library Trustees recognizes that programming is an essential component of library services for Middletown residents. Library programming provides an opportunity to advance the library and its resources to the community, promote literacy, reading, lifelong learning, and provide shared family activities.

The Middletown Public Library defines a program as an activity or event in a group setting, developed to meet the educational, social, recreational, cultural, or informational needs of an anticipated audience in the community. Programs can be a single event, a short series, or continuously recurring.

Programs may include, but will not be limited to: lectures, forums, visual and performance art, interactive classes or workshops, continuing education, fairs, discussion groups, technology programs, story times, class visits, library tours, community outreach, exhibits, and presentations for social, cultural, educational, or recreational purposes.

## **Criteria**

When making decisions regarding program content, presenters, and related resources library staff will consider the following:

- Relevance to the Library's mission, strategic plan, and service goals
- Community needs and interests, including feedback and suggestions from residents
- Potential to promote, supplement, and encourage the use of library collections & resources
- Presentation quality as determined by presenter's background, record of presentation, and qualifications in content area
- Historical, cultural, or educational significance
- Space required, and the availability of that space
- Budget
- Staffing
- Balance of current programs being offered at the Library
- Connection to other community programs, exhibitions, or events
- Safety and security of patrons and staff
- National and local observances, commemorative months, and initiatives (i.e., National Library Week, Women's History Month, Veterans' Day, etc.)

Library programs may take place at the Library's physical location, any off site locations, and online; and may be delivered by library staff or library partners. Programs may be live-streamed or recorded for later playback, either in person or via web-enabled technologies.

## **Funding**

The Library receives funding for library programs in a variety of ways including municipal appropriations, grants, and support from charitable organizations that support the Library. The Library may also partner with other institutions, organizations, or individuals who have received funding to offer Library programs.

Library programs are open to the public and offered free of charge. At the discretion of the Library Director, a fee may be applied to special and specific programs and goods that benefit the Library including book sales, raffles, and other types of fundraising.

## **Presenters**

Anyone interested in presenting a program may submit a proposal that will be reviewed by Library staff using this policy as a guideline. The Library reserves the right to decline a program for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, staffing, budgetary constraints, space, or scheduling.

A partnership is a relationship between Middletown Public Library and an institution, non-profit organization, community group, or individual. These relationships involve an effort to provide and/or promote activities and services for the public. Partnerships can range from a one-time collaboration to a long-term arrangement. The Library welcomes partnerships that promote civic engagement and support its mission and strategic goals, and may choose to co-host programs with these partners. Partners must comply with all library policies. Partners that participate in co-hosting a program receive acknowledgement in the library's marketing and PR materials.

Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program, or the views expressed by presenters or participants. Program topics, presenters, and resources are not excluded because of possible controversy.

Library programs are non-commercial in nature. Programs are not used for the solicitation of business.

Presenters and performers, whether individual or organizational, shall not use a Library program to petition, advertise, or recruit members or customers. While the Library welcomes professional experts to present at its events, Library programs cannot be used to directly further commercial, religious, political, or partisan purposes. Presenters are permitted to have business-related brochures, flyers, or other information available for attendees to pick up if interested. Presenters cannot distribute such materials as part of the event.

Individuals reserving spaces within the Library for meetings or events not co-hosted with the Library are responsible for their own marketing. These meetings/events will not be listed in the Library's event calendar, and will not be promoted by the Library. For more information regarding how to reserve Library space for these kinds of programs, please refer to our Meeting Room Policy and our Meeting Room Application Form.

Programs sponsored by charitable organizations whose purpose and mission is to support the Middletown Public Library may include the sale of merchandise as a means to fundraise for the benefit of the Library. Performers or presenters may receive permission to sell their creative works as part of a library program. Sale of these works and / or other products at Library programs is not permitted unless authorized by the Library Director or their designee. Presenters and performers who are willing may donate a copy of their work to the Library for possible inclusion in the collection. Their work will be subject to the Library's Collection Development Policy.

## **Intellectual Freedom**

The Middletown Public Library offers a wide variety of materials and programs to support its mission of encouraging the free flow of ideas to inform, educate, enrich, and entertain its patrons. The Library respects the freedom of information of its users and adheres to the principles expressed in the American Library Association (ALA) Freedom to Read Statement, Freedom to View Statement, the Library Bill of Rights and all relevant interpretations. The Library's goal is to offer a diverse set of ideas and opinions, including those which may be unorthodox or controversial. The Library opposes any attempts by individuals or groups to censor items in its collection or programs it offers.

Parents and guardians are responsible for overseeing their minor children's use of the Library's collections and services. The Middletown Public Library does not stand in place of a parent and is not charged with a parent's rights, duties, and responsibilities.

The Library will not act in the role of censor for any age level, material type, or subject matter. Selection of materials and services will not be restricted by the possibility that these items may be accessed by patrons beyond the intended audience. The Library does not use any system of coding, rating, or labeling to identify or segregate materials and services for purposes of censorship.

## **Open Access**

All library-initiated programs are open to the public, but some meetings and programs may be designed with specific audiences in mind, such as programs intended for children and teens that are geared to their interests and needs. Adults who wish to attend a program specifically designed for children must be accompanied by a child. Tween and teen programs are limited to tweens and teens only, except when they require an adult assistant or companion. Programs targeted toward specific audiences are to be publicized as such.

Every attempt will be made to accommodate all who wish to attend a program. However, when safety, cost, or the success of a program requires it, attendance may be limited. Admittance will be determined on a first come, first served basis, either through advance registration, or at the door. The Library reserves the right to deny attendance to anyone becoming disruptive to audience members or the program facilitator, and to anyone in violation of the Library Use Policy and Behavior Guidelines.

## **Cancellations**

Programs may be canceled for several reasons, including severe weather, absence of the presenter, or low registration. Canceled programs are not automatically rescheduled. When possible, advanced notification of program cancellations will be made on the Library's online calendar of events and by other appropriate communication channels.

## **Process for Reconsideration**

The Middletown Public Library supports intellectual freedom and endorses the American Library Association (ALA) Freedom to Read Statement, Freedom to View Statement, the Library Bill of Rights and all relevant interpretations. Patrons requesting reconsideration of library programs must complete the Middletown Public Library Program Request for Reconsideration form in its entirety. Only signed forms will be considered. The Library Director will acknowledge receipt of the form within two weeks. Anyone filling out the form must be a Middletown resident with an active Ocean State Libraries (OSL) library card.

The relevant library staff will review the program to ascertain whether it meets the standards set forth in the library's Program Development Policy, and will make a written recommendation to the Library Director as to the validity of the request. During this process the program in question will remain scheduled and publicized, and depending on timing, may happen before the reconsideration is evaluated.

The Library Director, after reviewing the recommendation, will render a decision as to whether the program will be canceled, or depending on timing, not approved to happen again in the future. A final appeal may be made to the Library Board of Trustees.

A copy of the request form without identifying patron information will be sent to the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom.

*Approved by the Middletown Public Library Board of Trustees on Tuesday, September 17, 2024*