

## **SERVICES IN THE TIME OF CORONA**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the library was open 7 days a week, a total of 61 hours, from September to May and 6 days per week during the summer. Services included free use of the meeting room by community groups and non-profits, free Wi-Fi, free scanning to email, free access to computers, free personal income tax preparation by trained preparers, art exhibits, low priced access to professional quality black ink and color printing, instructional workshops including 3D design and printing, programming for all ages groups, access to the Friends' gently used book store and a community garden in the rear of the property.

Gov. Gina Raimondo declared a state of emergency on March 9, 2020. The library closed to the public on March 13, 2020. All library staff continued to report to work. They were able to address collection management projects, specifically a complete inventory of the collection, weeding, and mending. Staff also spent considerable time updating the library's webpage, planning a revised virtual summer reading program, and installing a new online product, Beanstack, which was purchased in February with a Rhode Island Legislative Grant. Subsequently this product was made available to all Rhode Island libraries and so the grant funds will be used for another initiative.

In April, a literacy project was initiated to complement Gov. Raimondo's Reading Challenge. We named it, "Middletown Reads – Family Book Giveaway". It was supported by the Friends of Middletown Public Library and generous donors who made it possible for Middletown families to receive 2 free books for each child, age preschool to high school. In one month's time, 99 families contacted the library and 394 books were distributed to 197 young readers. We continued the program through June until the library's summer reading program was launched.

Also in April, the library initiated contactless curbside loans. This service became instantly popular and still continues. Contactless fee based printing also accessed by curbside pickup began in May.

In June, the library reopened to the public with restricted access when Reopening Rhode Island, Phase II was announced by Gov. Raimondo. In July, additional hours of restricted access were made available as the state entered Phase III.

More contactless public access is planned for September 2020 with the resumption of weekend service hours beginning October 1, 2020. The proposed schedule will be 7 days per week for a total of 54 service hours, dependent upon forthcoming directives from Gov. Raimondo.