



The BEST *of* FRIENDS

Spring
2020

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Juvenile Service Center Teens Talk about Books

By Tracey Wiggins, *Coordinator Friends of the Knox County Public Library*

Can you imagine never having read an entire book or never having visited a library until you were a teenager? Unfortunately, some children miss these opportunities, and on my recent visit to the Richard L. Bean Juvenile Service Center, I learned that greater than 70 percent of detainees reported as much. Detainee Jason (not his real name) said, “I didn’t know about libraries until high school. I couldn’t believe you could just take a book out.”

Jason, one of 20 kids I met in February, is among around 100 children ages 12 to 17 years charged with a delinquent act or crime who is being cared for at the center where runaways or alleged murderers may stay a few hours to several months while waiting on a court date or a transfer. The center is one stop on their journey, an opportunity for Friends of the Library to address their needs by placing the best books in their hands through our Books in the Community project.

Youth at the center said how much they want to see themselves in the books they read. They are sincerely interested in stories of people who achieved success and moved on from where they were. Like any other teenager, these teens asked for books about celebrities, famous musicians, and sports stars, but they also asked for stories on drug users, justice, the Bible, and books about

odddities and people that are different. The girls also expressed a desire to read a woman’s perspective and hear a similar voice. Their cumulative answers show a need for connection – a desire to see themselves represented in the media, a hope to hear of someone like them that not only survived, but have also thrived. Some of them just want to forget and think about something else entirely. Detainee Starr requested a book “that could take you away from where you are even for just a little while.”



A Juvenile Service Center classroom for girls



Teens everywhere enjoy graphic novels like these that the Friends have purchased for the center.

SEE PAGE 3: YOUNG PEOPLE

The Friends Put Books and KCPL on Parade



TOP: In December, Paul and Claire Serrell helped families select Spanish-language and bilingual books on Empty Stocking Fund Distribution Day, and members of Friends and the KCPL staff recreated *The Crayons' Christmas* in the Knoxville Christmas Parade. **MIDDLE:** In February, best-selling author Erik Larson returned to Knoxville to talk about his latest book, and culinary historian Michael W. Twitty presented the 2020 Wilma Dykeman Stokely Memorial Lecture. **BOTTOM:** In March, Friends President Sharon Smith and KCPL's Nelda Hill, Myretta Black, and Mary Pom Claiborne traveled to Nashville on Tennessee Library Legislative Day to talk with members of the state legislature, including Sen. Becky Duncan Massey (center).



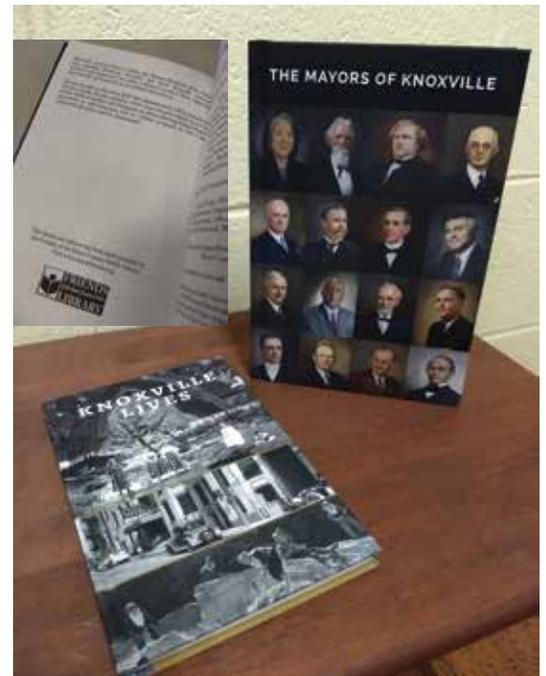
Friends Put Knoxville History Books on KCPL Shelves

“History is who we are and why we are the way we are,” says Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian David McCullough.

Thanks to a grant from Friends, Knoxvilleians will be able to learn more about the whos and whys of the place they call home. Five copies each of hardcover editions of two additional books from the Knoxville History Project (KHP) — *Knoxville Lives* and *The Mayors of Knoxville* — have been published and added to the Knox County Public Library’s collection.

KHP was founded in 2015 by journalist and local historian Jack Neely, the current executive director. Neely, who is also the author of several books in the library’s collection, says “history should mean something to the people who live here, and make them feel they belong, no matter who they are.”

Making more books about local history available to library patrons is one of the ways Friends is helping foster a love of libraries, books, and reading in our community. And although we can’t visit the Knox County Public Library in person right now, we can look forward to checking out *Knoxville Lives*, *The Mayors of Knoxville*, and other KHP books when library doors open again.



Young People Need Books Wherever They Are

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Books can help young people find a love of reading and increase their literacy levels, but the right books are necessary — books that speak to their experience, books that light them on fire and make them think and dream and hope for a better tomorrow. Studies

show that students who are encouraged and supported to improve their reading skills and literacy level are less likely to end up in the juvenile service center, and those who have already spent time in the system have a greater chance of not returning. Funded by generous donors, our Books in the Community project allows

us to purchase books chosen to meet the needs of those benefitting from more than 50 local organizations with which we work. The Richard L. Bean Juvenile Service Center is only one of them.

Putting books into the hands of these Knoxville youth who come from diverse cultures and social status, with varying educational abilities, is very much a part of our mission “to foster a love of libraries, books, and reading in the Knox County area through community outreach, advocacy, and support of the Knox County Public Library system and staff.” Surrounded by plain walls, bright lights, and locked doors, allowed only minimal personal possessions, these young people can still choose books.



Art at the Richard L. Bean Juvenile Service Center celebrates “lives saved through caring” and “remembrance of lives lost to child abuse.”



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Appreciating Your Library in New Ways

What does the Knox County Public Library mean to you? **National Library Week** (April 19–25) is the perfect time to ponder that question.

Initiated by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1958, National Library Week celebrates the valuable role libraries play in our communities.

Last year, nearly 130,000 KCPL card holders made 1.3 million visits to the library and checked out over 2.7 million books, movies, and CDs. This year, as KCPL prepared to close its doors to the public in response to COVID-19, the library increased limits on the number of items that could be checked out as well as on renewals and loan periods to ensure that patrons would have access to as many books and other materials as possible during the closure.

Friends President Sharon Smith has indicated that the Friends will express appreciation to the 200+ members of the KCPL staff with a Panera gift card when the library reopens. Sharon also plans to submit a letter to the editor of the *Knoxville News Sentinel* on behalf of the Friends, promoting the enormous community service provided by the Knox County Public Library.

For now, take advantage of your library’s extensive online resources. And whenever an opportunity arises, show your support of the library by thanking your branch library’s staff, not only for their valiant service today but for their devoted service every day.