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Health Literacy Grants Awarded to 36 Oklahoma Libraries and Literacy Programs

Innovative project enters its 10th year

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) is awarding Health Literacy Grants to 36 public libraries and literacy programs to bring activities and health information to Oklahomans around the state. The grants—totaling more than \$220,000—are courtesy of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which has touted the 10-year-old project as an innovative use of federal library funds.

Programs and activities that will be funded during this round of grants are diverse, according to Leslie Gelders, literacy coordinator at the department. “Grantees will be conducting healthy cooking demonstrations, a variety of different exercise classes for different ages, information sessions on mental and physical health issues, programs on gardening, walking challenges, and even a new pickleball court in one community.”

Miami Public Library will be using the funds from the health literacy grant to aid the community in several health programs. Fitness courses for adults and children will be available at the library. From Tai Chi and aerobics to general fitness and children’s martial arts, there is a variety to choose from. Cooking classes will also be offered this year taught by professional chefs and cooking instructors. Health educational courses such as Healthy Eating for Diabetes and Teen Health will be taught by the Ottawa County Health Department and the ROCMND Youth Prevention Program. Miami Public Library hopes that their efforts to share Health Literacy will improve the lives of the community.

When ODL began the Health Literacy Project in 2012, Gelders said the initial focus was on serving adult literacy students by providing easy-to-understand health information and healthy activities.

“It didn’t take long for the project to grow,” Gelders said. “Within a couple of years, local libraries and literacy organizations began approaching us with really creative ideas on how to get more of their community members involved in health literacy programs and activities, and we fully supported their efforts because our state ranks so low in health outcomes.”

One popular trend that has emerged in recent years is building Story Walks in communities. Story Walks are fun and educational activities that keep families moving in the outdoors. Laminated pages from an oversized children's book are displayed along an outdoor path. As families walk down the trail, they're directed to the next page in the story.

Fourteen Story Walks in 12 communities have been established with past grants. Gelders said nine more Story Walks are coming to the state thanks to this year's round of grants.

"I think Story Walks have become a popular option because of the pandemic," Gelders said. "Outdoor activities have been safer for children and families during this time."

The pandemic also impacted how last year's grantees provided programming.

"Libraries and literacy programs did have some inside programs during the last grant period, but they also held virtual programs, and often brought their exercise classes and other activities outside the library or into a public park," Gelders said.

Wherever the programs were held, they attracted strong participation. The 26 grantees last year held 1,039 individual programs with 15,967 attendees in-person or virtually. In addition, the online programs were viewed more than 30,000 times.

"There's no way to know how many of those viewing online programs were new participants and how many were watching again for information or to continue an exercise workout," Gelders said. "Either way, it shows how popular these programs were."

The 36 grants awarded this year is a record, Gelders reports. During the past ten years, more than 200 grants have been awarded to 66 libraries and literacy programs.

"Many sites have applied for the grants over multiple years to further develop and continue their health literacy efforts," Gelders said. "And we always have some new sites coming onboard each year." There are seven first-time grantees this year: libraries in Cherokee, Cleveland, Enid, Haskell, Jay, Muldrow, and Newcastle.

The 2021-22 grant awardees are listed below by U.S. Congressional District. For more information on Oklahoma literacy efforts, visit libraries.ok.gov/literacy or contact info@libraries.ok.gov.

2021-22 Health Literacy Grants

Congressional District 1

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Service

\$9,000

The library will keep the community in motion with a variety of exercises, from Xtreme Hip Hop and Zumba to gentle yoga and Tai Chi. Other programs will address smart cooking and education on health insurance.

Congressional District 2

Checotah–Jim Lucas Public Library (Eastern Oklahoma Library System)

\$9,000

Pickleball, the fast-growing and easy-to-learn sport, is coming to the library in Checotah thanks to the grant. The library's contribution to the community endeavor will be purchase of all equipment as well as training and promotion.

Durant–Donald W. Reynolds Library

\$4,000

Exercise classes like Zumba, and yoga for adults and children, will be offered by the library along with classes on diet, diabetes education, and self-defense.

Haskell–Reiger Memorial Library (Eastern Oklahoma Library System)

\$3,210

Community members will be able to sign up for challenges to improve their activity-level, hydration, and nutrition. Classes will be held on healthy nutrition and habits, as well as understanding blood pressure.

Jay–Delaware County Public Library (Eastern Oklahoma Library System)

\$3,310

The library in Jay will host the same programs as the library in Haskell (see above) with a special emphasis on reaching the region's Hmong community.

Miami Public Library

\$9,000

Programs and activities will include Tai Chi, adult aerobics, youth fitness, and healthy cooking classes.

Muldrow Public Library (Eastern Oklahoma Library System)

\$3,210

Like the libraries in Haskell and Jay, Muldrow will sign up residents for challenges to improve participants' activity-level, hydration, and nutrition. Class offerings will cover healthy nutrition and habits, as well as information on blood pressure.

Congressional District 3

Altus–Great Plains Literacy Council

\$9,000

Partnering with the Southern Prairie Library System that serves Jackson and Harmon counties, the literacy council will offer Tai Chi classes, exercise programs for seniors, classes on healthy cooking and nutrition, and will join the Walk to End Alzheimer's. In addition, Family Fun Fridays will be gatherings that feature fun fitness activities and healthy snacks.

Beaver–Beaver County Pioneer Library

\$4,000

The library's offerings will include exercise classes, programs on gardening, and information on understanding blood pressure.

Cherokee City-County Public Library

\$4,000

The library will use grant funds to construct a Story Walk in the community.

Cleveland–Jay C. Byers Memorial Library

\$4,000

The library will use grant funds to build a Story Walk.

Enid–Public Library of Enid and Garfield County

\$3,294

Programs in Enid will focus on yoga, Tai Chi, walking, healthy cooking, gardening in small spaces, and mindfulness.

Piedmont Public Library

\$9,000

The library will host special programs for seniors (Eye Care, Ask a Nurse, and a book club focused on health), a women's wellness retreat, and programs for children (yoga, music and movement, and a fitness camp).

Sapulpa–Creek County Literacy Program

\$9,000

The program will offer classes in Tai Chi Quan to promote physical and mental health, a student book club focusing on Healthy Selections, and healthy cooking classes.

Stillwater Public Library

\$8,437

The library will build an additional Story Walk in the community.

Yukon–Mabel C. Fry Public Library

\$7,284

The library will build a Story Walk on park land in the community.

Congressional District 4

Ada Public Library**\$9,000**

The library will host programs on healthy cooking and container gardening. A seed starter and exchange program will encourage home gardening. Exercise classes will include yoga, Pilates, and Tai Chi.

Ardmore–Southern Oklahoma Library System**\$9,000**

The library system will host programs at its various branches in Carter, Love, Johnston, Atoka, and Murray counties. Exercise programs will include yoga, stretching and flexing, and low impact exercises. Programs on healthy cooking, gardening, and dealing with stress are planned, and a pop-up Story Walk will bring the reading and walking activity to communities throughout the region.

Blanchard Public Library (Pioneer Library System)**\$6,310**

The library will keep families moving with interactive exercise classes. Tippiie Toes dancing classes will be held for youngsters. Other programs will share information on healthy cooking, gardening, and the importance of nutrition in forming and maintaining a healthy brain.

Chickasha Public Library**\$4,500**

The library will host exercise programs for various age groups. Other programs include classes on CPR and Art Therapy. The library will also purchase supplies to refresh the community Story Walk and to restock the healthy food programs for teens.

Elgin–Friends of the Elgin Community Library**\$4,000**

Programs and activities will include CPR training, water aerobics, senior fitness, women's health, hiking, healthy cooking, and gardening.

Lawton Public Library**\$9,000**

The library will add new items to its *Library of Things* collection for check out to patrons. The new items will focus on health and activities: pulse oximeters, a disc golf set, weighted hula hoops, a wheel chair, light therapy box, and more. The library will also set up bike repair stations to help keep community members cycling, and will host Tai Chi classes.

Moore Public Library (Pioneer Library System)**\$6,335**

The library will host healthy cooking demos as well as programs on gardening and children's fitness.

Mustang Public Library

\$9,000

The library will construct a Story Walk and Fairy Walk. The Fairy Walk will send youngsters on a search through park land to locate little fairy homes!

Newcastle Public Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$6,521

The library will build a Story Walk in the community.

Noble Public Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$8,048

The library will build a Story Walk.

Norman Central Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$3,000

The library will use the grant to sponsor wellness workshops and health cooking demonstrations.

Norman East Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$3,000

The grant will fund programs on mental health and teen/adult mindfulness. There will also be healthy cooking demonstrations as well as classes on yoga, dance, and senior fitness.

Norman West Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$3,000

Norman's westside branch will host programs on yoga and meditation, and will demonstrate healthy cooking methods.

Oklahoma City–Southwest Oklahoma City Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$4,595

The library will develop a Pop Up Story Walk that can move around the community. The branch will also host bike tours and healthy cooking demonstrations, as well as programs on mental health.

Pauls Valley–Nora Sparks Warren Library

\$9,000

Grant funds will provide a Story Walk for the community, as well as programs on Tai Chi, meditation, gardening, yoga, Alzheimer's care, and dealing with diabetes.

Ringling–Gleason Memorial Library

\$1,700

The library will offer yoga and Tai Chi for adults, and kids in the kitchen and kid's yoga for the younger set.

Congressional District 5

Oklahoma City–Community Literacy Centers, Inc.

\$9,000

Students of the program will participate in a writing program focusing on health issues, and embark on urban and nature walking excursions.

Oklahoma City–Opportunities Industrialization Center

\$9,000

OIC will use the grant to fund a number of programs: support for a student garden and walking trail, healthy cooking demonstrations, a hydration challenge, exercise classes, and information on mental health and dental health.

Shawnee Public Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$8,265

Shawnee will build a Story Walk in the community.

Tecumseh Public Library (Pioneer Library System)

\$3,950

The library will sponsor a women’s health retreat, host classes on yoga, and hold programs on healthy cooking and mental health.

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The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) is the official state library of Oklahoma. It serves the information and records management needs of state government, assists with public library development, coordinates library and information technology projects for the state, and serves the general public through our specialized collections.

The department has championed the cause of adult literacy since 1983. ODL’s Literacy Resource Office provides resources, leadership, and technical assistance to library and community-based literacy programs throughout the state. Additionally, the office coordinates several statewide literacy initiatives.

The mission of the Institute of Museum and Library Services is to advance, support, and empower America’s museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development.