

Between the Lines

The library doors may be closed, but remember, when you can't go to the library, the library can "come" to you. The Alpine Public Library website provides access to all kinds of digital opportunities, all day, every day without having to leave your home. During this time please take advantage of the resources your Alpine Public Library provides as a service to the community.

ALPINE PUBLIC LIBRARY

June 2020

What's happening at Alpine Public Library?

When will the library reopen? That's the question at most libraries across the state and the nation. It's hard to believe that at the beginning of March the thought of closing the library was no more than a remote possibility. Then, on March 18, with little notice, the library had to limit services to only digital and curbside and had to close completely on April 1 with the stay-at-home order.



The reopening process will be multi-step. Our priority is the safety of the public, staff, and volunteers. On May 1, as restrictions eased, we resumed curbside service. I'm happy to say the staff remained healthy during the "lock-down," and they were eager to get back to work. We continue to encourage the use of the library's digital services. The library is operating with limited hours and services. Requests for books are filled between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM on Monday and 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM Tuesday through Friday. To request books, call, e-mail, or reserve online. We will also make copies. If possible, e-mail us the documents you want copied.

To help those in our community without computers or Internet we are making one-hour appointments for computer use in order to apply for benefits, look for jobs, or other critical activities. You must wear a face mask. No more than three people will be allowed on the computers at a time. For everyone's safety the computers are cleaned after each use. Library materials are quarantined for 72 hours before being returned to circulation.

We are constantly monitoring conditions and will make appropriate changes as necessary. The bottom line is we want to return to regular service as soon as safely possible. Please call us with any questions, and we'll do our best to help.

Most of APL's summer programs will be online this year. These programs include BookPoints, Seesaw, Toddler-aerobics and Story Time, and Sand Stories. More information on these programs is available on page 6 of this newsletter.

We are coordinating kids' program schedules with the Marfa Public Library and Jeff Davis County Library so there will be programming available almost every day of the week. For more information and to receive program login access, e-mail kids@alpinepubliclibrary.org.

—Don Wetterauer, PhD,
Executive Director

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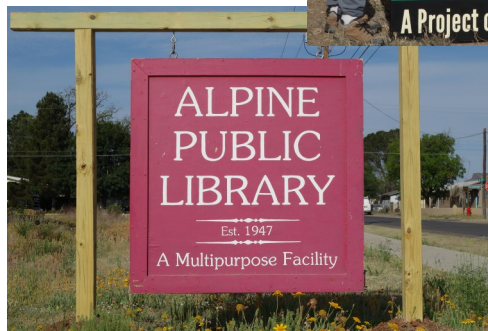
Amy Farrington

The APL Staff,
finding new ways to
fulfill the library's
mission

Lee Smith & Jim Robertson

We realize that money is tight for everyone right now because of the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak, but if you're trying to think of a good way to honor or memorialize a loved one or friend, please consider making a donation to the library. Your donations help support the library as it continues its crucial role in our community.

New Signs!



Thank you,
Tish Wetterauer,
Alan Wallace,
and Mike Brown!

Miss shopping at Re-Reads?
Visit our Amazon Storefront.

Your purchases
benefit your
nonprofit library.

Amazon Storefront



Congratulations to
Loreyna, Alpine High
School graduate and
Alpine Public Library
Circulation Intern

Loreyna Cardoza
Alpine High School
2020

Curbside Service Available Now!

Check out materials: To reserve items in the library catalog, call or e-mail desk@alpinepubliclibrary.org with a list of items you would like to check out.

Pick up materials: Items will be available for pickup ONLY between 10 AM and 4 PM, Tuesday through Friday or between 9 AM and 1 PM on Monday.

Print, make copies, or send a fax: Call the library at 432-837-2621 for information.

Use a computer: Call the library to make an appointment for limited computer use.

All online electronic resources, databases, e-books, etc., are available 24/7 by logging in to your library account at alpinepubliclibrary.org, using your card number and phone number.

Thank you
business
Friends!

Alpine Radio
Alpine Community Credit Union
Alpine Vacation Rentals
Alpine Veterinary Clinic
Aramark TX
Bee Wranch
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Eva's Salon
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Marathon Basin Wool Mill
Murphy Street Mercado
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Pretty Bird Salon
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Talley-Reed Insurance
Taste and See Bakery
Twin Peaks Liquors
Wasserman Wranch
WR Ranch

A Long History

The Alpine Public Library's future is being altered as we speak. It's unlikely that library services will have the same face once we reopen, and maybe that's not all bad. Change—even change that's forced on us—can compel us to look at things in new ways, maybe better ways.

During this enforced isolation we've all been living through, I've been working to create an archive of the history of the library and the Friends of the Library. I'm not a professional archivist, so my process has been unscientific, to say the least. I've slogged through all the minutes of every meeting of the Friends that I could find, starting with 1998. I've trudged through the minutes of every meeting of the APL board I could get my hands on, also starting with 1998. What I've seen every step of the way is—change.

In April 1998, a group of library supporters met at the home of Jean and Dick Zimmer and formed the Friends of the Library. Dick was elected president, Margaret Matthews, vice president, Troy Solís, secretary, and Verna Bonner, treasurer. Dick became APL director in August, and Ellen and Chris Ruggia succeeded him as co-presidents of the Friends.

From the beginning, the Friends concentrated on fund-raising and supplementing the always-small staff. That hasn't changed because our sources of funding have not changed much over the years, and the staff, for financial reasons, has had to remain small. Those early Friends worked hard under difficult circumstances (that hasn't changed either). Instead of a permanent bookstore from which to sell books, they had monthly book sales in the driveway of the old library building across from the courthouse. Books were stored in a garage and hauled out and placed on tables for every sale; at the end of the day, back into the garage they went. Then, as now, most of the volunteers were persons of a certain age, so the physical demands were significant. We counted on help from groups of young people—then, students from the High Frontier, now, athletes and student government leaders from Sul Ross State University and Elders of the Church of Latter-Day Saints.

Early fund-raising efforts ran along the lines of flyers distributed to RV parks, Mountain Country

Christmas, T-shirts, tote bags, seasonal “giving trees,” penny jars and monthly silent auctions at the circulation desk, holiday gift wrapping, calendar sales, coffee and mug sales, soft drink sales, dog walk-a-thons.

Some of these things we still do, but we realized in about 2004 that we needed to change our approach

to one of sponsoring events that would bring in “bigger” money. Enter the Gallery Night/Art Walk Silent Auction; the Adult Spelling Bee; three Art Chair auctions (oddly enough, all about 7 years apart); Dancing with Alpine's Stars; chocolate, coffee, wine, and vodka tastings; commemorative bricks; Giving Tuesday; and Amazon book sales. We are still doing the small-change stuff like patio sales and coffee mugs, but we are now

focusing on larger-scale annual events because one big thing hasn't changed: our volunteers are, for the most part, still of a certain age. And many of them have been around since 1998. We learned a good lesson between 1998 and 2004—that we don't have the personnel to raise funds using the bake sale mentality anymore.

Probably the biggest change from the early days was the move into the new library in 2012 (coincidentally, the library's 65th year of operation). Gone was the plastic sheeting protecting children's books from the leaky roof; gone was the freestanding bookstore; gone was the grungy carpet; gone was the rabbit warren of staff offices. Now we had state-of-the-art everything. But one thing had not changed: we still had to rely on volunteers to raise money and supplement staff.

Now we have to protect those volunteers, the staff, and patrons from something that even the most successful fundraiser can't help us with: the COVID-19 virus. Now we have yet another layer of things to worry about. Now it will be more difficult and yet even more vital to raise funds and find volunteers to keep this community hub functioning.

We have always had a good thing in the Alpine Public Library. We likely will still have a good thing when this settles down—just good in a different way.

—Kathy Bork

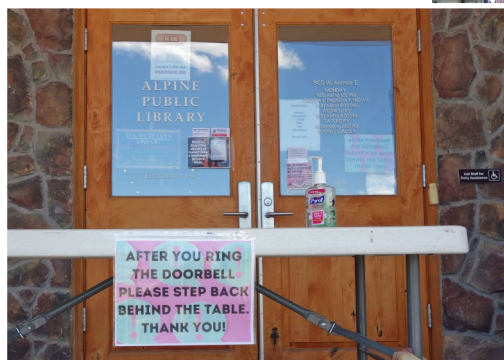


APL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

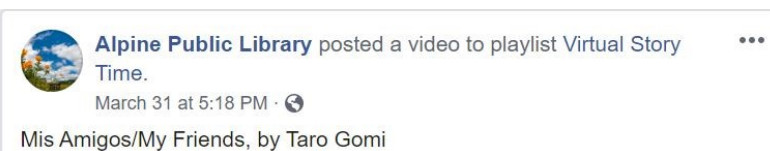
“Alpine Public Library is closed until further notice.” This unprecedented statement appeared in patrons’ inboxes on March 31. For the first time since APL opened its doors in 1947, they were closed, and no one knew when they would open again. Following government orders to stay at home in response to the spread of COVID-19, Don Wetterauer, the library director, closed the building and sent the staff home. Along with the rest of the Big Bend, they sheltered in place.

No browsing the stacks and discovering the exact book to read right now. No easing into the chair by the window and skimming the newspaper. No chatting with the circulation librarian. No volunteering in Re-Reads. No meeting to plan the next fund-raiser. No fund-raisers. No Terrific Tuesday lunches. No Spanish-language classes. No GED classes. No ESL classes. No Toddler Time. No Travel Talk. No Kids Tech Open Lab.

Prior to the March 31 closure, Don limited library services to curbside only in keeping with Centers for Disease Control guidelines for dealing with the pandemic. Starting March 18, patrons were able to reserve materials online or by phone and pick them up in the library parking lot. Technical services, like printing and copying, were available by special arrangement. In the meantime, staff members cleaned and disinfected everything from books to keyboards. On May 1, the stay-at-home order was rescinded, and curbside services were once again available.



*I miss smack talk with Don.
—Kathy Bork*



Bienvenidos! Welcome to Story Time

I miss the wonderful staff, and the busy-ness at the library, but also the lunch gatherings.

—Alexandra Moldovan

Although programs were cancelled in mid-March, a few have continued in modified form. Volunteer Cindy Sotelo has maintained connections with homebound patrons and regularly delivers books to them. Mary Beth Garrett, the children’s librarian, posts Virtual Story Time videos on social media. Each video charms with a variety of character voices, background music, and sound effects. Volunteer Edy Elfring continues to nurture the library plants with weekly watering and pruning, and Martha and Mike Latta keep the trees in the yard healthy.

Pruitt and I began talking about the podcast Boomtown the other day. I suggested that he read the book Friday Night Lights. My mental note of checking the library for a copy was abruptly, sadly erased, along with that uplifting feeling that comes when planning a trip to APL. It’s just a small instance but the walls seemed a little closer in that moment and I realized that the library is a part of the “normal” that I want back.

—Amelie Urbanczyk

APL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Re-Reads volunteers have managed to process donations and update the library Amazon offerings. After the stay-at-home order was lifted, volunteers Kathy Bork, Linda Bryant, and Kathy Donnell created a schedule so that only one person at a time would be in the Re-Reads workroom handling books and using the computers. As a consequence, sales on Amazon have been strong, providing much-needed income during the time the library and Re-Reads have been closed. Don and volunteers are now packing bags of like books—same author, same genre—to make them available for curbside sales. Bags will sell for \$1 or \$2 each.



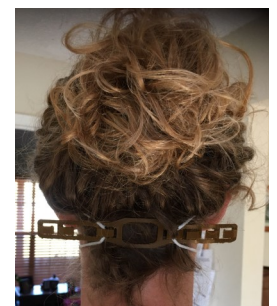
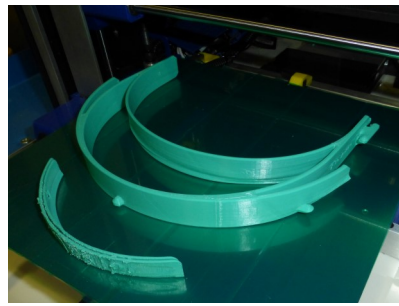
As odd as it sounds, I miss processing books for Re-Reads and Amazon. I get into a Zen mode when I'm in the back room surrounded by towering stacks of dusty books ranging from best-sellers to how to use "humanure" to grow great cabbages.

—Kathy Bork

Librarians contributed to the efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Circulation librarian Josefine Cintrón made dozens of cloth masks for healthcare workers and other individuals. Don and Mary Beth used the library's 3D printer to make face shield headbands and mask extender clips.

I miss working in Re-Reads. The customers love books, and nearly every one of them is an interesting person with intelligent opinions. During one shift, I was delighted to meet a famous lumberjack, a Jewish man from Yorkshire, England, and a ballerina who once danced with the Bolshoi Ballet. Just as delightful are the "backroom" women at the store—Linda, Mary, and the Kathys. I miss their friendly smiles and help when my brain and the computer go to war.

—Elaine Davenport



Throughout the pandemic, staff members have kept in touch with patrons by sharing helpful information on social media. Public service announcements on COVID-19 and the 2020 census were regularly posted. Facebook and Instagram posts provided links to downloadable books on the virus appropriate for children and to other digital resources, like AudioBookCloud, for adults.



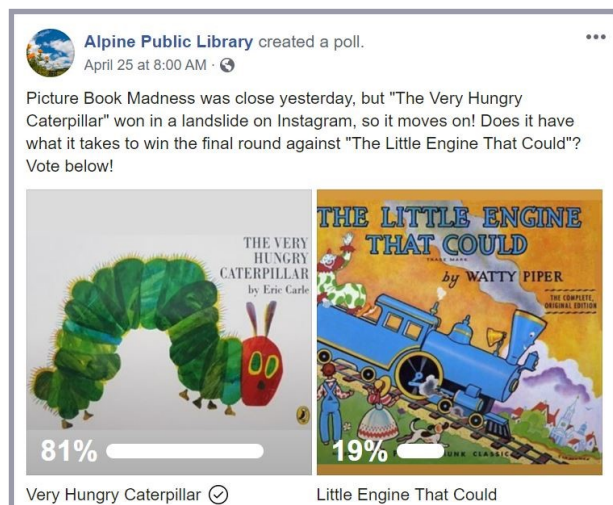
I miss the freedom to have the privilege of popping into our beautiful building, seeing the smiling faces of our staff and browsing for a favorite or new author. I think next to not being able to attend Church, I miss the library the most!

—Virginia DeLaO Pena

As a retired librarian, this is the first time in more than seventy years my local library hasn't been an almost daily part of my life—very uncomfortable!

—Linda Bryant

APL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19



Social media followers could participate in Picture Book Madness and vote for their favorite children's books. Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* won after several rounds.

Another popular feature of the library's social media was librarian Casey Costa's shelter-in-place diary. Gwin Grimes spoke for many patrons when she stated that she eagerly anticipated Casey's daily posts: "It is a laugh I definitely need at this time."



Staff members have been working to give patrons access to materials and programs in new ways. On May 13, Spanish-language classes resumed via Zoom. Other adult programs, including group English as a Second Language conversation classes, are using Zoom to begin meeting again. Mary Beth has developed several summer programs for kids that involve digital formats and do-at-home packets.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Book Points: Book Points is a lively summer reading program for ALL ages. Earn tee-shirts, book bags, coffee, mugs, ice cream tickets, or a trip to the "treasure chest!" The program will be launched in early June. Visit alpinepubliclibrary.bookpoints.org to sign up.

Seesaw: Meaningful summer programming can happen anywhere. Seesaw is an engaging digital platform that promotes literacy and learning over the summer with steady interactions from the children's librarian. For kids entering kindergarten through second grades. If interested, please e-mail kids@alpinepubliclibrary.org

Literacy Packets: Themed literacy-based packets for toddlers through 6th grade include craft projects, book suggestions, and responsive activities. Pick them up using our curbside service all summer long. Themes will change every few weeks.

Toddler-aerobics and Story Time: Get ready to dance, sing, stretch, and read! Every Thursday morning beginning June 11 (or sooner!) from 10:30 to 11:00 AM via Zoom. Send an e-mail to kids@alpinepubliclibrary.org to receive a link.

Sand Stories: Interactive storytelling via Zoom meetings. Participants need only a pencil and paper. Grades 3–5. Send an e-mail to kids@alpinepubliclibrary.org to receive a link. Meets every Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 PM beginning June 17 (or sooner!)

As board member Amelie Urbanczyk, pointed out, the closed library "seems like part of the sacrifice everyone is making right now, so missing those aspects of it feels dutiful, an act of solidarity." Even though the library is off limits to patrons, it has remained central to the health of the area. Despite the pandemic, it continues to fulfill its mission "to build community, encourage literacy, and promote lifelong learning." For the time being, the library can't offer "a welcoming facility," but it still provides "relevant and enriching resources that connect our diverse and geographically remote area to the world."

A Man Walks into a Library

It sounds like the opening line of a joke, but it's actually what Mike Brown does. He walks into a library or church or similar institution and asks what he can do to help. Occasionally he is paid; most of the time he volunteers. In January, he walked into Alpine Public Library, asked if he could help, and received his first assignments before his volunteer application was complete.

Since then, he has replaced the faucet in the library break room; installed motion-detector light switches in the bathrooms; repaired gutters; tightened screws on the roof; built shelves for the children's program storeroom; trimmed weeds; hung signs; replaced lights and ballasts; and finished the storage building with insulation, drywall, paint, and shelves. And he has worked in Re-Reads.

Mike's plan was to be in Alpine until April 5, when he and his wife, who works remotely for an Indiana mental health facility, would pack up their trailer and move on to Wyoming. But the coronavirus pandemic and the shelter-in-place order in mid-March forced a change of plans. Up to this point, he had been volunteering at the library and driving a Meals on Wheels shift. He worked alone on some of the library projects and sometimes in conjunction with Alan Wallace, another APL patron and volunteer. After the library closed, the Browns extended the lease on their campsite to June, and Mike and Alan continued with their projects.

In 2013, when the Browns sold their house and plot of land in Indiana, they moved into a travel trailer and started touring the country. Mike took up volunteering and workamping, work partly compensated with an RV campsite. As an engineer, Mike worked in Indiana and Texas until 2014, when he resigned his position, became "semiretired," and went on the road. He subsequently worked seasonally for Amazon CamperForce in Kentucky and volunteered at the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery in Uvalde, Texas. In 2016, he was recruited to return to work as an engineer on special assignment in Mexico until he went back into semiretirement in 2019.

West Texas has been a draw for Mike and his wife since they lived in El Paso in the 1990s. They visited Big Bend National Park with their children during this time and returned in 2006 when their daughter chose to visit the park for her graduation trip. So Alpine was a good fit for their workamping/volunteering lifestyle. And walking into Alpine Public Library was a natural move for Mike.

Mike has been a library patron for as long as he can remember. He thinks that he was about five when he got his first library card. His mother was a



"voracious reader," and she passed her love of books and reading on to him. He typically gets a library card wherever he lives; if a library card isn't an option, he reads books in the library.

Mike learned his volunteer ethic from his mother, who believed in paying it forward. He wants to help others and to "make the world a better place as he passes through it." In his view, "it's nice if somebody appreciates" what he does, but he doesn't need to be thanked. He just wants to be "satisfied" with his work. In response to the suggestion that the newsletter include a profile of him, he pointed out that many others in Alpine volunteer and that he felt "guilty being profiled." The work he's done for the library reflects this ethic. People will notice, with appreciation, that the light comes on by itself in the restroom and that new signs invite them into the library and Re-Reads. For the most part, though, his work will go unnoticed by patrons despite its value to the library.

If possible, Mike and his wife will depart Alpine on June 5. He will leave the library facility much improved in ways not obvious to patrons. But APL will pay it forward in service to the community.

—Lee Smith



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Alpine, TX 79830

Phone: 432-837-2621
www.alpinepubliclibrary.org

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