



F·R·I·E·N·D·S

OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Supporting Friends of the Library Statewide

F * R * I * E * N * D * S TALK

February 2026

Dear Friends,

It's February! Here in the mountains, we are in the middle of COLD! ICE! SLEET! Single digit temperatures! Many of you are as well. What a great time to stay curled up in your favorite chair or sofa and read that book you've been putting off. Well, I guess that also depends on having power! We were really lucky in our neighborhood to keep power throughout the storm. We're not often that fortunate.

If you haven't heard, the ALA (American Library Association) has reported "Congress is on track to fund libraries"! In fact, the current US House budget proposes an *increase* in funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). It was on the President's chopping block, but Congress is funding it. Let you member(s) know you expect passage!

So, there are some fun and important holidays to celebrate this month. Judy has given you a nice list at the end of this newsletter. However, I would like to share one of my favorites: Library Lover's - and it's all month long! You know about Groundhog Day (who doesn't?), but what about Take Your Child to the Library Day? We should celebrate that every month. Some famous birthdays are this month: Thomas Edison and Abraham Lincoln are two. And, of course, Valentine's Day and Random Acts of Kindness Day. That last one should take place every month! Whatever holiday is

your favorite, celebrate it! Have fun! (Hopefully, there's a book involved. . .).

If you're a regular reader of this newsletter, you have probably noticed that MOUs have gotten a lot of attention. Well, it's not over! That's because many Friends groups are entering into them for the first time or having changes made to existing ones. Some groups have been lucky enough to have a voice in theirs and able to make changes and suggestions for language. I hope that's the case in yours. Do not be afraid to take time to study yours. Involve your group, attorneys, other groups who have experience, etc. If you have not read the previous articles addressing MOUs in this newsletter, know that past issues are available on our website.

February also gets us a month closer to spring! I hope we will get our storywalk installed when the ground thaws. The pieces have been in storage since last fall. We are looking forward to that day. There are also some local elections taking place. Pay attention to who is running and what their level of support for libraries may be. If it's not yet public, ASK! Do not be shy about letting candidates know what your position is.

Yours in Friendship,

Joyce Speas, President

MASS MARKET PAPERBACKS BEING PHASED OUT

Those Friends that conduct book sales or that have bookstores should take note that as of the end of 2025 ReaderLink, the largest full-service distributor of hardcover, trade, and paperback books to booksellers in North America stopped distributing mass market paperbacks. Mass-market paperbacks are generally 5x7 inches and are printed on lower quality materials. Popular in drug stores, airports, grocery stores, and big-box retailers, their sales peaked between 1960s and the mid-1990s.

There are several reasons attributable to this trend. First is the gradual disappearance of racks at the stores and the proliferations of chain bookstores. Second, is the decline of book shelf space in big-box retailers where mass market paperback declined in profitability.

Why is this info useful to Friends? You can plan your sales and shelf space accordingly.



Did you know that: Mardi Gras's signature purple, green, and gold colors were established in 1872 by the Rex parade organization to honor the visiting Russian Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich Romanov, whose family colors included these shades. They were later given symbolic meanings: Purple for Justice, Green for Faith, and Gold for Power.



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**2026
DUES
\$35!**

JOIN US THIS YEAR

**It's time to renew!
Join as a Friends group
or as an individual...**

We hope you will join or renew your FONCPL membership! It's more important than ever for FOL's around NC to stand together as advocates and fund raisers for our libraries.

**FIND THE GROUP FORM [HERE](#). FIND THE INDIVIDUAL
FORM [HERE](#).**

FONCPL POLICY STATEMENT

The Friends of North Carolina Public Libraries statement regarding contracts, Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), and agreements between libraries and Friends of the Library groups.

Our Board was recently informed that one regional library system was pressuring its Friends groups to sign an MOU. In the cover letter, it stated, "...the Friends of North Carolina Public Libraries advocate for Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)...." We want to set the record straight, and we therefore issue this policy statement regarding contracts, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), and agreements between libraries and Friends of the Library groups.

FONCPL neither recommends nor disparages contracts, MOUs, or agreements between libraries and Friends of the Library groups. What we do adamantly oppose are clauses or elements in these documents that:

- Would require the Friends to be negligent in their fiduciary responsibilities to their Friends nonprofit organization were they to sign a document that calls for them to cede control of the Friends (and its money) to the library.
- Violate the rights of a nonprofit incorporated in North Carolina that are granted under NCGS 55A (for those so incorporated).
- Put the group's 501(c)(3) status at risk by becoming a funding conduit solely for the library, since effectively the Friends Board would no longer be in control of the nonprofit's finances and/or initiatives.
- Direct the circumstances under which they expect the nonprofit to "disband."

FONCPL takes exception to the model MOU touted by the United for Libraries/ALA, specifically the following clauses:

"The Friends agree that any and all monies raised will be spent exclusively for library programs, services, and other library-defined needs, unless otherwise agreed to by both the Friends and the Library." (On the surface this looks benign, but what if the Friends want to install a permanent StoryWalk at a local park and the library disagrees? Or what if the Friends want to buy a new laptop for the Friends' Treasurer to use for Friends accounting and the library disagrees? And remember that while you may have a good working relationship with your current library director, that may not always be the case.)

"Parties agree that money received by the Friends should be used to support a Library branch and/or the Library system, and that those funds should supplement and not supplant public funding." (Again, this looks benign, but it does say that "...money received by the Friends should be used to support a Library branch and/or the Library system...")

"The Friends agree that if they cease to actively fundraise and promote the Library, they will disband, allowing for a new Friends group to be established in the future." (As a legally separate entity, the library cannot dictate to the Friends that they must dissolve.)

The Friends of the North Carolina Public Libraries therefore advises all Friends groups to carefully read every word of the proposed document to ascertain if their rights to govern their nonprofit are being impinged or violated. Whether or not your Friends sign the document is your decision.

AMERICA CELEBRATES 250 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

The State of North Carolina's Department of Natural & Cultural Resources has an official [website devoted to celebrating America's 250th birthday](#). [Click here](#) for calendar. The site is packed with things to do, sites to explore, events to attend, and stuff to learn. Many libraries are planning their own events to join in on this auspicious occasion.

So how might the Friends participate? Begin by asking your library what they have planned. Ask them how you might help or collaborate. Perhaps they need funding to host a drum & bugle corps demo. Perhaps they need a piece of equipment to host a virtual visit to a national museum. Maybe they'd like a new American flag and flag stand for their auditorium or meeting room or one for outdoors exhibit.

The following are AI-generated ideas:

Friends of the Library can celebrate America's 250th anniversary in 2026 by organizing "Read, White, and Blue" reading challenges, hosting Revolutionary War-era book discussions with Ken Burns clips, or arranging local history "Memories Road Shows". Key activities include partnering with DAR/SAR for genealogy workshops, creating themed children's crafts like "Liberty Bell Ringers," and sponsoring historical lectures.

Historical & Literary Programs:

- **Book Clubs & Discussions:** Read historical fiction or non-fiction (e.g., 1776 by David McCullough) combined with screenings from Ken Burns' The American Revolution.
- **"Memories Road Show":** Invite community members to bring in, discuss, and document

local historical artifacts, photos, and documents.

- **First-Person Presentations:** Hire actors to portray Revolutionary War figures or host local historians for lectures on the era.

Family & Children's Activities:

- **Crafting Adventures:** Organize "Oh Say Can You Bead" pixel art (state animals/landmarks) or "Liberty Bell Ringers" crafts.
- **American Girl & History:** Celebrate with American Girl doll-themed history sessions (e.g., Felicity).
- **Scavenger Hunts:** Create scavenger hunts based on the Declaration of Independence.

Community Engagement:

- **Reading Challenges:** Launch "Read, White, and Blue" or "Reading is Revolutionary" reading challenges.
- **Civic Engagement:** Partner with local DAR/SAR chapters for genealogy workshops to help residents find their Patriot ancestors.
- **Oral History Projects:** Host a "What does Freedom mean to you?" photo or essay exhibit.
- **Commemorative Event:** Plan a public reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026.

The key is to start NOW.



MORE ON THE MOU ISSUE

(Disclaimer: Nothing in this article is intended to constitute legal advice. Your legal questions should be addressed to an attorney.)

Friends groups in another NC library system were recently sent an "MOU." The cover letter said, "Attached is a copy of the ... Board-approved MOU for your signature." They were given a date by which they were to sign it. There was no offer of negotiation. Questions were to be directed to the library system director.

The supposed "MOU" was really a legally binding contract, so stated in the first paragraph of the "MOU." (that's why the use of quotation marks around the term) Interestingly enough, this "MOU" was clearly not drafted by an attorney as it was missing all the boilerplate language that we have seen in other such documents.

Two of the five Friends groups had astute Board members with collectively vast experience in dealing with MOUs and contracts. Both did an extensive analysis of every element in the "MOU." The bottom line: The "MOU" went way beyond coordination and risk management into control over the Friends' assets, speech, and existence—without due process. Ultimately the Friends' Board has the fiduciary responsibility to operate its nonprofit in accordance with its purpose, bylaws, corporate rights under NCGS 55A, and its legal obligations as a 501 c3 entity. These were all negated by "MOU" elements.

Now comments like that may not apply to your Friends' specific situation, so don't quote that without due consideration as to how it might or might not apply. If you use those phrases in a public forum, you had better be ready to back them up with

specifics including how they apply to the MOU under scrutiny. You have to do your own analysis.

A contract is generally negotiated by the parties involved. Contracts should very clearly spell out who does what, when, and how, especially when it comes to money. Every key term needs to be defined at the outset so there are no misinterpretations. This particular contract did neither. [Click here](#) for a primer on why contract language is so very important. **Don't assume anything about what is written in the "MOU."**

Now this particular "MOU" had much of the same language (or intent) as we have seen in other similar "MOUs." The section on what the library agreed to do (3/4 of one page) vs. what the Friends were expected to do (2 full pages) looked like this (see below) with the heavy burden being on the Friends to comply.



Within the body of this "MOU" in the section stating what the Friends had to do, there was a consequence/punishment phrase that was used **five times**: "...transfer all assets to the library's escrow account..." for non-compliance. WOW! These trustees must really mean business, or perhaps they were just plain mean. But, let's take a closer look at this. In the first paragraph of the "MOU" they defined the term "the Library" to mean

Continued on the next page

MORE ON THE MOU ISSUE (CONTINUED)

the Board of Trustees of the library system, not of the specific library served by the Friends group. The second thing to note is that they use the phrase "escrow account." Local governments rarely use escrow accounts in this way. "An escrow account is a secure, third-party-managed account used to hold funds or assets temporarily, until specific contractual conditions are met." Governments set aside money in fund balances, Capital Improvement Plans, or investment funds. Governments rarely use escrow accounts. Think of it this way, escrows are used to have a trusted 3rd party for business transactions. Most bigger cities/counties have both CPAs and attorneys on staff. Why would you need a 3rd party to hold funds to ensure they don't get released improperly? This is literally the job duties of those type staff, so unless there is a NC General Statute that requires it, the staff handle it. Governmental accounting is meticulous and each type of transaction gets tracked in their specially designed governmental fund accounting software by fund and marked as "restricted" funds or "fiduciary" funds on audits. The

main time you might see an escrow is when a developer is working on a large project and the county may want the money "off their books" and earmarked for this, again very rare. So this was definitely suspect.

So, if the Library decided that the Friends group was non-compliant on some aspect of the "MOU" the Library could take all the Friends' assets and put that money in an escrow account that was not even designated for the library that that Friends' group served!

That was probably more than you wanted to know, but it points out how diligent you must be in reading every single word of a contract and understand the possible implications, especially when they are not spelled out.

One Friends group chose to ask questions and are waiting for a reply. Another group asked, "What happens if we don't sign?" Two signed with no or minimal discussion and the jury is still out on the fifth.

Next month we'll continue with Chapter 2 of this saga which might be the last, depending on what transpires.

Happy
Valentine's Day!



Using AI Tools to Create & Plan Library Programs by Cindy Shipley

Using AI tools for Library programming for children, teens and adults help library staff work more efficiently and can also increase the variety of programming the library offers. AI supports faster program planning, sparks creative and inclusive ideas, improves outreach, and helps tailor offerings to community needs—all without replacing staff expertise. By reducing administrative workload and enhancing accessibility, AI allows library staff to focus more time on meaningful engagement with library patrons, high-quality programs, and equitable service. Investing in responsible AI use positions the library as an innovative, future-ready community hub while supporting staff efficiency and sustainability.

I used Claude.ai with the prompt: **Plan a Library program for adults on genealogy research using AI tools**

Here's a structured plan for a library program focused on genealogy research using AI tools:

Program Title: Unlocking Your Family History: Genealogy Research with AI Tools

Program Overview:

- **Objective:** Introduce adults to genealogy research and demonstrate how AI tools can assist in tracing family history.
- **Duration:** 2 hours
- **Target Audience:** Adults interested in genealogy, regardless of prior experience.

Agenda:

1. Introduction to Genealogy (15 minutes)

- Overview of genealogy and its importance.
- Brief discussion on traditional vs. technology-assisted research.

2. Understanding AI Tools in Genealogy (30 minutes)

- Introduction to AI tools for genealogical

research (e.g., Ancestry.com, MyHeritage, FamilySearch).

- Demonstration of AI-driven features like record matching and ancestor hints.
- Discuss ethical considerations and data privacy.

3. Hands-On Workshop (50 minutes)

- **Activity 1:** Participants create or access their genealogy accounts.
- **Activity 2:** Guided session on using AI tools to search for family records.

✦ Sub-activities:

- ✦ Utilizing AI to analyze historical documents.
- ✦ Exploring relationships through AI suggestions.

4. Closing and Resources (15 minutes)

- Provide a handout with resources, including:
 - Websites for further research.
 - Recommended AI tools and apps.
 - Local genealogy groups and archives.
- Encourage participants to share their genealogy stories.

5. Ethics, Privacy & Pitfalls (10 min)

Cover:

- Never upload sensitive info about living people
- AI hallucinations & how to verify claims
- Bias in historical records
- Why citations still matter

Golden Rule: AI suggests—records confirm. Emphasize: AI assists research—it doesn't prove lineage.

Materials Needed:

- **Equipment:**

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AI Use in Library Programming (Continued)

- o Computers or tablets with internet access (one per participant or in small groups).

Projector and screen for demonstrations.

Promotional Strategies:

- **Marketing Materials:** Flyers and posters in the library and local community centers.
- **Social Media:** Announcements on the library's social media platforms.

Email Newsletter: Send out information to library members.

Follow-Up:

- **Feedback Survey:** Collect participants' feedback to improve future programs.
- **Follow-up Sessions:** Consider offering advanced workshops based on demand.

Potential Challenges:

- Ensure technological readiness (internet speed, device availability).
- Address varying levels of tech-savviness among participants.

Genealogy with AI: Library Program Handout by Cindy Shipley

Genealogy with AI: A Practical Guide

AI tools can help you organize records, transcribe documents, summarize findings, and generate research ideas—but they work best when used thoughtfully. This handout introduces useful tools, example prompts, and key ethics & privacy tips.

AI created a clean, print-ready **library handout** that you can use as-is or customize for your Library's program and available resources. It's structured for patrons who may be brand-new to AI, with clear sections, practical prompts, and librarian-friendly ethics guidance.

If you want, I can:

- Adjust the reading level (basic vs. tech-savvy patrons)
- Add a **1-page version** for quick classes
- Localize it with **library-licensed databases** you already offer

Turn this into **slides**, a **workshop outline**, or a **take-home PDF**

AI won't replace careful genealogy research—but it can save time, spark ideas, and help tell richer family stories when used responsibly.

1. AI Tools for Genealogy (with links)

General Research & Writing

- **ChatGPT** - Ask research questions, summarize records, generate timelines, and draft family histories <https://chat.openai.com>

Claude - Helpful for summarizing long documents and historical texts <https://claude.ai>

Transcription & Text Extraction

- **Google Lens / Google Photos** - Extract text from photos of documents <https://lens.google>

Transkribus - Advanced transcription for handwritten historical documents <https://www.transkribus.org>

Document Analysis & Organization

- **Notion AI** - Organize notes, timelines, and family research <https://www.notion.so/product/ai>

Microsoft Copilot - Summarize and analyze documents in Word or PDFs <https://www.microsoft.com/copilot>

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Genealogy with AI: Library Program Handout (Continued)

Genealogy-Specific Platforms (AI-assisted)

- **Ancestry** - Record hints, document suggestions, and DNA insights <https://www.ancestry.com>
- **FamilySearch** - Record matching and re-search guidance <https://www.familysearch.org>
- **MyHeritage** - Photo enhancement, record matching, and translations <https://www.myheritage.com>

2. Example Prompts for Genealogy Research

Getting Started

- "I have census records from 1880, 1900, and 1910 for the same person. Can you help me create a timeline and note inconsistencies?"

"What types of records should I look for next when researching an immigrant who arrived in the U.S. around 1895?"

Analyzing Documents

- "Summarize this obituary and extract names, dates, locations, and relationships."
- "Rewrite this family story in clear, engaging language while keeping the facts accurate."

Transcription & Interpretation

- "Help me interpret this 19th-century handwritten letter. What does the language suggest about daily life at the time?"
- "Explain unfamiliar historical terms found in this land deed."

Organization & Writing

- "Create a simple family group sheet based on these notes."

- "Draft a short narrative biography using the facts below, and clearly label assumptions."

3. Ethics & Privacy Tips

Protect Living People

- Do **not** upload sensitive information about living individuals (full birthdates, addresses, DNA data).

Use initials or placeholders when testing prompts.

Verify Everything

- AI can make mistakes or invent details.

Always confirm facts with original records and reliable sources.

Be Transparent

- Clearly label AI-assisted writing in published family histories.

Distinguish between **documented facts**, **inferences**, and **family stories**.

Respect Cultural & Historical Context

- Be cautious with assumptions about ethnicity, race, or relationships.

Remember historical records may reflect bias or outdated language.

Understand Data Use

- Read each tool's privacy policy.

Avoid uploading rare or irreplaceable materials unless you have backups.

Importance of Youth & Teen Reading by Karen Robbins

I met a boy yesterday at my library. He was skipping through the children's room looking very pleased with himself. I asked him if he had a book to check out. He said, "I have three books! And next time I may get more! I'm seven. I'm learning to read. I'm in first grade." Such joy for reading, for learning, for getting just the books you want, for coming to the library again soon...that is my library experience too.

Sadly, statistics are beginning to come out that show that banning books or limiting availability of certain authors or titles doesn't actually cause kids to go get the books and read them. Instead, they don't read books. They can't find the best books, the ones they want the most. They also are only reading excerpts and parts of literature in school, partly due to educational changes and partly to 'be safe'. Librarians and educators often self censor because of new state laws that would criminalize them.

I remember that not long ago we knew better in literacy education. We knew that reading whole works and discussing complete books helped get children engaged and excited, like my small friend was at the library. And this year, as kids are entering college, the reduction in the numbers of books available to them for the past four years, due to

restrictions and bans, has limited what they have been able to learn and think about.

"For young people in some states, including Florida, Texas, Utah, and others, this means that they've never had access to a wide swath of books on topics like racism, gender, puberty, or sexuality that their peers in other states have." —Kelly Jensen, "The Generational Impact of Book Bans on Teens: Book Censorship News Literary Activism, January 23, 2026.

In the 70's, a study asked teens to share opinions on book banning and also take a vocabulary test at the end. The study concluded that teens who believed they should have the freedom to read, read more often, and had better vocabulary. The more they read, the more they wanted to read.

This should strengthen your resolve to continue to support public libraries, your local boards of education, the library board of trustees, and library workers all across your counties. These folks on the front lines of engaging children and teens with books and literature, to learn about civics, to know their rights, and to find the joy again in reading.

Censorship News by Karen Robbins

Censorship News From January 23: Kelly Jensen's list—In Sarasota the school board decided they should cooperate with ICE marginalizing students who are at risk; Alabama Fairhope Public Library is getting no funding from the state due to the state insisting that LGBTQ books not be available in areas where there are minors; Katy Public schools in TX removed/banned 140 books last week thanks to two senate bills; Minnesota has anti-book ban laws but many schools haven't developed policies reflective of the law as yet. These are hints of ongoing challenges to librarians and citizens who love their libraries. Pay attention and speak out if you can. Your voice matters.



The worst thing
about censorship
is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Censorship Resources by Karen Robbins

PEN America <https://pen.org> "PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world."

Freedom Forum <https://www.freedomforum.org/famous-banned-books/> "News stories about book bans have been on the rise in recent years. Attempts to challenge books, restrict their availability in some way, or completely remove books from public school classrooms and libraries have happened in many states and school districts."

Some states have debated or passed laws about book challenges and removals — both favoring them (such as Idaho) and opposing them (such as Washington).

ACLU <https://action.aclu.org/petition/defend-every-students-right-learn> "Every student has a First Amendment right to read and learn about the history and viewpoints of all communities - including their own identity - in and outside of the classroom. This wave of censorship activity is attempting to erase the legacy of discrimination and lived experiences of Black and Brown people, women and girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals. And it's refusing to let students think for themselves."

ACLU of North Carolina <https://www.acluofnorthcarolina.org/legislation/hb-636-banning-books-schools/> "Protecting all North Carolinians' right to free speech and expression is at the heart of the ACLU of North Carolina's mission."

Book Riot <https://bookriot.com/> "Book Riot is the largest independent editorial book site in North America and home to a host of media, from podcasts to newsletters to original content, all designed around diverse readers and across all genres. We've been recommending buzzy and under-the-radar books, celebrating the reading life, reporting on headlines from the world of books and publishing, and bringing readers the progressive, feminist, inclusive bookish content they love since 2011."

Literary Activism (Kelly Jensen at Book Riot) <https://bookriot.com/category/censorship/> Fighting Censorship, book banning, defending the right to read.

National Coalition Against Censorship <https://ncac.org/> "Every generation of Americans faces new and significant challenges to free expression. For almost 50 years, NCAC has acted as a first responder to protect this freedom, which is both a fundamental human right and a keystone of democracy in the ever-changing American nation. We promote freedom of thought and inquiry and oppose censorship. When controversy occurs, we encourage and facilitate dialogue between divergent voices and perspectives, including those that have historically been silenced."

ALA ala.org "Empowering and advocating for libraries and library workers to ensure equitable access to information for all. The Association advocates for funding and policies that support libraries as great democratic institutions, providing the full range of information resources to people of every

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Censorship Resources by Karen Robbins (Continued)

age, income level, location, ethnicity, or physical ability."

Office for Intellectual Freedom <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif> "The Office for Intellectual Freedom is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights, the Association's basic policy on free access to libraries and library materials. The goal of the office is to educate librarians and the general public about the nature and importance of intellectual freedom in libraries."

United For Libraries <https://www.ala.org/united> "Library funding is under threat. Find out how you can show up for libraries: [ala.org/showup](https://www.ala.org/showup)."

NCLA <https://nclaonline.org/advocacy> "The mission of the North Carolina Library Association shall be to promote libraries, library and information services, and librarianship; and to champion intellectual freedom and literacy programs."

I Love Libraries <https://Ilovelibraries.org> "Libraries and schools across the country are experiencing unprecedented levels of attempts to ban or remove books from their shelves. I Love Libraries will continue to raise awareness by highlighting attempts to censor library materials, as well as efforts

by librarians, parents, students, and concerned citizens to push back against them. This update includes news from North Carolina, Florida, and the U.S Supreme Court and a look at PEN America's recent book ban report."

*Author websites regarding censorship—

Judy Blume <https://judyblume.com/judy-blume-on-censorship/>

Laurie Halse Anderson <https://madwomanintheforest.com/educators/censorship/>

Jodie Picoult Discussing 19 Minutes on YouTube: <https://www.facebook.com/PENAmerica/videos/1162858772669935/>

Authors against Book Bans <https://www.authorsagainstbookbans.com/> "We, a coalition of writers, illustrators, anthology editors and contributors, and other book creators, stand united against the deeply unconstitutional movement to limit the freedom to read. We unequivocally support the availability of diverse voices on our library shelves, in our schools, and in our culture. We pledge to band together against the oppression of literature, to speak when our voices are silenced, to go where our bodies are needed, and to fight as one to ensure this freedom. Together, we will be fearless."



PEEPS Diorama Competition

Peeps, you know those ooey, gooey, iconic marshmallow treats that are in the shape of chicks and bunnies around Easter, make for an interesting competition. The best part is that almost every age can participate, individually or as groups. The contest can be themed or not.

So what is a Peeps diorama? A Peeps diorama is a creative, miniature scene built inside a box (often a shoebox) that uses marshmallow Peeps candies as characters to represent pop culture, historical events, or scenes. Popular around Easter, these dioramas often feature elaborate, pun-filled, and artistic designs crafted by people of all ages.

One of the better-known Peeps diorama contest is sponsored by the Washington Post. [Click here](#) to view the WaPo 2025 contest winners being announced.

[Click here](#) to watch Matt Roger's create a Peep Diorama. [Click here](#) to view science themed Peeps Diorama contest. [Click here](#) to see the Express Your Personality Gallery on the Peeps website.

[Click here](#) for an example of Peep Diorama Contest Rules & Information published by Blount County Public Library. [Click here](#) for rules example from Stow Munroe Falls Public Library.

This could be a lot of fun!



Dollar General Literacy Foundation 2026 Grant Cycle Open

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation 2026 grant cycle is open for applications via their online portal, with deadlines for Adult/Family/Summer Reading grants on **February 5, 2026**, and Youth Literacy grants on **April 2, 2026**. Applicants must be 501(c)(3) nonprofits, schools, or libraries within 15 miles of a Dollar General store, offering up to \$10,000 for Adult/Family and \$3,000-\$4,000 for others. [Click here](#) to access the Dollar General Literacy Foundation's grant page.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

Please follow the steps under each grant type and check out the FAQ page.

FAQS

ABOUT GRANT PROGRAMS



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Public Libraries**

Helping Friends Build Resilience

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CALENDAR

All material for the newsletter is due to editor Judy Hills by the 25th of each month.

Click here for the 2026 Calendar of National Events—use these to plan your activities.

FONCPL Board Zoom Meetings 10 AM quarterly

Here are a few dates of note:

FEBRUARY

- 2/1 National Freedom Day
- 2/2 Groundhog Day
- 2/3 US Feed the Birds Day
- 2/4 National Girls and Women in Sports Day
- 2/7 Take your Child to the library day
- 2/8 National Boy Scout Day
- 2/8 National kite flying day
- 2/8 Super Bowl Sporting Event
- 2/9 National Pizza Day
- 2/11 Thomas Edison's Birthday
- 2/11 International Day of Women & Girls in Science
- 2/12 Lincoln's Birthday
- 2/14 Valentine's Day
- 2/14 International Book Giving Day
- 2/16 Presidents' Day
- 2/17 Random Acts of Kindness Day
- 2/17 Mardi Gras
- 2/20 National Love Your Pet Day
- 2/26 Digital Learning day

MARCH

- 3/1 Zero Discrimination Day
- Mar 1-7 Return the Borrowed Book Week, Teen Tech Week
- 3/2 Read Across America Day
- 3/2 Dr. Seuss Day
- 3/4 National Grammar Day
- 3/6 National Day of Unplugging
- 3/6 Employee Appreciation Day
- 3/6 World Day of Prayer
- 3/14 Genealogy Day
- 3/8 Start of Daylight Savings Time