Hillsdale opens new space for teens

Just in time for summer on June 7, Hillsdale Library opened its newly constructed teen space. The new space features power outlets with USB ports; a dry erase table; comfortable furniture; a collection of teen games, magazines, and graphic novels; and flexible space for future displays of artwork or other teen items.

The project was led by Hillsdale Youth Librarian Barbara H., who saw the potential for a space that could serve teens in the community. The library had inviting work and study spaces for adults, and reading and play spaces for children and families, but no welcoming areas for teens.

“We really wanted teens to know that they are a priority and part of our community,” said Barbara. “Before, all we had was a small corner with bean bag chairs. It was popular with teens after school, but the area was surrounded by children’s nonfiction books and was often in use by young children with their parents.”
Library staff gathered input from teens in the community, including from students at nearby Wilson High School and Robert Gray Middle School, about what features they’d like in the space. Then, the staff worked with Hillsdale’s Teen Council — a group of teen volunteers that select programming and organize events, build teen displays and consult on decisions that affect teens using the library — to make detailed selections for furniture and carpet colors.

Staff reconfigured the area, including removing shelving, and built the teens a comfortable and flexible space to gather, read, do homework and collaborate on projects. The space complements the “teen lounge” at Gresham Library that opened in October 2017.

This summer, the new teen space will be put to good use as Hillsdale welcomes more than 40 teen volunteers to assist with the annual Summer Reading program.

**Meet Nadia, lead contact center representative**

In January 2017, the library streamlined services and fast and reliable library help with the introduction of a new contact center. Previously, tracking down the right staff person to get a question answered may have involved calling individual library branches, an account services number, or a reference line. Now, a call to the library means you’re likely to reach Nadia, who together with 14 of her colleagues, answers nearly 400-500 patron calls coming into the library each day.

“Having the contact center has really improved service for our patrons. They don't have to worry about tracking down the right person or branch to get the item they need or to get an issue resolved,” says Nadia.

As a lead contact center representative, Nadia answers, and trains other library staff on answering, hundreds of patron inquiries each day that come in via phone, email, and text message — everything from account related questions and brief reference questions to hold requests and digital technology help. Along with other staff, she refers patrons to
other Multnomah County services or to a team of Multnomah County librarians dedicated to answering in-depth research questions.

“The moment between the phone ringing and the person stating what they need is the moment of anticipation where it could be literally anything,” she adds.

Before starting at the library, Nadia would wander Central Library with her three young children. Having decided she needed a change from her career as an elementary school teacher, she saw the library staff and knew that helping connect others to information was the job she was seeking. While finishing her Master of Library Science degree online from San Jose State University in 2013, she began working for Multnomah County Library as an on-call library assistant. In that role, she worked at nearly all library branches helping patrons before coming to her current position in the contact center— a job that she says was “tailor made” for her.

“It's been very gratifying helping people connect with the library even if they aren't coming into our branch,” says Nadia. “Just recently, I helped a woman in her 90s who was determined to read e-books. I talked her through downloading the app and checking out her first e-book. And she did it! I was so pleased to help her get to that special ‘aha’ moment and connect with the library in a new way.”

As the contact center helps more and more patrons access library services, Nadia looks excitedly toward the future:

“As the ways people access information have changed, the library has changed too. The world is becoming increasingly digital, and the library has to bring people along and help address disparities in digital literacy. The contact center has been an exciting next step in serving patrons, while giving us the opportunity to identify better ways we can continue to evolve our service and make it more consistent. The library is a place where people come to learn their whole lives, and I'm thrilled to be a part of helping others on that journey.”
Over 100 artists signed on to Library Music Project

In early June, Multnomah County Library launched the Library Music Project, a new collection of more than 100 albums available to stream and download at librarymusicproject.com. Listeners can stream or download music from anywhere, with access to a collection that includes styles and genres from hip hop to bluegrass to rock.

"The Library Music Project is creating a way for local musicians to share their music locally and with the world online," said Kelly Jones, Music Director for Portland Notes and submission evaluator. "Artists need encouragement and exposure. This project gives local musicians a louder voice, and I'm proud to participate."

Within a few weeks after launch, visitors to the Library Music Project had already streamed songs more than 3,000 times. The most streamed artist to date is Lewton Jones.

A panel of local music experts helped select the top albums for the inaugural collection from among 400 submissions received earlier this year. The library compensated contributing artists whose work was selected.

“Libraries today are reflections of their community,” said Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke. “I can't think of a better way to reflect Portland and Multnomah County than through the
vibrance, passion, energy and talent that shines through in the work of these artists. I am grateful to those in our local music community who stepped forward as partners with the library to share their work.”

The library will open another submission window in September 2018.

**Four fast facts**

- The library has 12 locations with Teen Councils.
- 231 Teen Council volunteers contributed more than 2,500 hours of service from May 2017 to April 2018.
- From January 2017 to January 2018, contact center staff answered 142,216 calls.
- In August 2017, the contact center set their own record by answering 723 calls in one day, with most calls asking where to get eclipse glasses.

**Patron comments**

“I am a long time Patron of Central Library. All staff have been courteous and helpful to me, but one particular Librarian has consistently gone above and beyond on my behalf. She always greets me with a welcoming smile, and over the years has come to know my interests and makes reading selections to suit my taste. More importantly she has encouraged me to broaden my horizons, particularly with Female and Foreign authors. I am speaking of Heather E. This shout-out is long overdue and I truly hope MCL knows what an asset she is. Her customer service skills, her knowledge and her overall demeanor are incomparable. She is an absolute delight and we are all the better for her presence. Thank you Heather and Thank you Central Library!” (anonymous) — Central patron, June 9

"The youth selection [at Belmont Library] is excellent. Finding good diverse books here is a breeze!” — Seth, June 10

"What Great Service! I come to the [Belmont] library for that Reason. Thank you Ben for your Great Help!” — Bill, June 5

"The staff are so nice, patient + helpful to people with diverse needs + disabilities and it always cheers me up to be in such an understanding and safe space as the N. Killingsworth library [North Portland Library]. I hope they all are recognized for their important service." — Michelle, June 5
In the news

Portland librarians fight overdoses with Narcan (Koin, June 29)
Summer reading fun gets cracking at county libraries (Hollywood Star, June 29)
Multnomah County Library Summer Reading (KGW- Portland Today, June 22)
Public Library eBook & Audiobook Use Goes Viral with Libby App (PR Newswire, June 21)
Portland’s favorite summer reading: One book keeps coming back (Oregonlive, June 21)
Library’s summer reading game kicks off (Gresham Outlook, June 15)
Know a Notre Dame grad, class of ’67? Multnomah Co. Library found their memory scrapbook! (KATU, June 15)
Portlanders celebrate Juneteenth (The Skanner, June 14)
Libraries celebrate Juneteenth in Kenton and Humboldt (Hollywood Star, June 14)

Upcoming events

Engineer It! Exploring Ancient Technologies
Wednesday, July 11
3:30 pm
Hillsdale Library

The Zaniac Comedy Show
Friday, July 13
10:30 am
Central Library

Squid Dissection and Marine Science
Monday, July 23
2:00 pm
Capitol Hill Library

Harry Potter Summer Camp
Wednesday, July 25-27
1:00 pm
St. Johns Library

Gardening Camp for Kids
Monday, July 30 - Aug 3
10:00 am
Capitol Hill Library

Experience the World of Ghana
Saturday, August 4
10:30 am
Albina Library

Self-Defense (a weekly series)
Monday, August 6-27
6:30 pm
Kenton Library

Theatre for Real Life: Social Justice Action (camp for teens)
Monday, August 13-17
1:00 pm
Rockwood Library