



July 8, 2020

Dear President Silva and Members of the Library Board,

This letter is to bring you up to date on activities during the months of March, April, May, and June, 2020 and to provide a look forward to some of the activities, programs and plans we are working on.

At our January meeting we had a discussion regarding the Library Services Report and perhaps changing the format and/or the statistics that the Library Board receives. I did not make any changes for the March Library Board meeting and shortly after that meeting, the Libraries closed due to the COVID-19 emergency. The Library Services reports will not look like its “normal” self because most of those services are not available during the closure.

Happy News! Supervising Librarian Marlon Romero and his wife Kristen welcomed their son, Miles Suyama Romero, to the world on June 11. Miles was born a healthy 7 lbs. 15.3 oz. The family is doing well, although a little sleep deprived. Marlon took a couple of weeks off, is back working for three weeks to help with our fiscal year-end closure, and will be off again for another three weeks bonding with his son.

Library Services Reports: (Consent Agenda). The February 2020 Library Services Report is included in your Board Packet. Other interesting activities/services provided to the community during the closure is also included. The Expenditure Reports for March, April, May and June are also included.

Main Library Update. The Librarian recruitment for a Full Time position replacing Dawn Boyer was complete. Joy North joined our staff on March 2. Unfortunately, due to personal reasons she submitted her resignation about six weeks later. Fortunately, we have an “active” eligibility list and Supervising Librarian Sierra Campagna will request the list from Human Resources and we will likely bring some of those candidates in for a second interview via Zoom.

On March 16 all three Libraries were closed due to the Coronavirus or COVID-19 emergency per the Alameda County Health Department Order to Shelter in Place. All staff were sent home, most of the full time staff determined whether they were able to work from home. Only essential work was to be continued, as the Library Director I participated with City Management as part of the Emergency Operations Center. I working alone in the Main Library I brought my dog, Cooper, to work with me as my “building alarm” The book drops at all three libraries were open and were emptied every three days (in order to let the virus die) and Lori came in to pay bills and do payroll. The City provided three weeks of pay for all part time employees however the PT staff were furloughed in early April. Not expecting the Shelter in Place to go beyond a few weeks, FT staff continued to work from home. Staff had already adeptly pivoted and we had shifted funds in the budget from our print collections to our digital collections and really began promoting the databases, streaming services, and other items our website already offered. Children’s developed online story times, and to avoid copyright issues, posted the story time on Instagram Live so it would disappear after one week thus not violating the copyright law. Story time is currently offered twice a day, in the morning about 10:15 a.m. and an evening story time about 7:15 p.m. Monday through Friday. The evening offers a reading of a longer picture book and a chapter from a longer book. Supervising Librarian Eva Volin has now done hundreds of these story times, filmed

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with her iPhone; and as other Children's staff now are working in the building, they have also helped to lighten Eva's load by taking turns presenting the online story times. At this same time, Library Staff were redeployed out into the community as emergency workers and 8 of our 18 FT staff were assigned to work shifts at the Alameda Food Bank. Some were trained to supervise daily operations, some helped to pack & prepare the individual boxes/bags for giveaway, some directed traffic, and some made deliveries, just about anything the Food Bank needed assistance with, city staff (not just library) assisted. Staff also helped with procurement of emergency supplies working with EOC senior managers. All the "emergency worker" activities were in addition to offering virtual library services. By the end of May and early June the Library Management team had pulled together plans to start bringing FT staff back into the buildings. Any virus that may have been in the buildings would have died, the City arranged for the cleaning service to do a deep clean of the Main Library and the library custodian did extra cleaning at the two neighborhood libraries. The City purchased disinfecting fogging equipment and hired an employee to fog all City facilities. The fogging will hopefully become a monthly routine. The libraries have now had their deep cleans and disinfecting. Staff had worked in teams to come up with building protocols for number of staff in a space, what and how to clean surfaces, etc. There are "Wellness Check" stations in all the public buildings so everyone who enters (at the start of the work day) takes their temperature, affirms they have no symptoms or have been in contact with someone who may have the Coronavirus, and signs in. Disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer are available but frequent hand washing is encouraged.

As some restrictions were being lifted, plans were discussed on how to offer a curbside pickup program. The Library launched "Library Takeout" on Monday, June 15, for our customers to pickup materials placed on hold, online or by phone, at the Main Library. Requests placed prior to and/or being held during the closure were also be made available for pickup. Takeout orders are available for pickup within 48 hours of the request, staff calls and arranges a pickup day and time. Materials are checked out and bagged for the customer so when they arrive at the Main Library, staff can place the bag on a book cart to offer the bag in a touchless manner to the customer. Library Takeout was available on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays from noon to 5:00 p.m. beginning June 15 however everything went so smoothly and staff were almost overwhelmed by the volume on just the three days that beginning Monday, July 6, Library Takeout will be available Monday through Friday from noon to 5:00 p.m. Book returns are open at all three libraries. Returned items are quarantined for 72 hours before they are made available for request by the next customer. This service will only be offered at the Main Library as we refine the procedures before expanding any service. On the first day of Library Takeout, the Library had 1800 pre-existing material holds waiting for pickup; by the end of the day almost nearly 500 were picked up and an additional 137 appointments were schedule for the next Takeout day.

2020 Summer Reading Challenge at the Alameda Free Library began on June 1 and will run through July 31. The entire summer reading program is online this year. The Reading Challenge was created to encourage reading as well as life-long learning, this nine-week program is open to everyone from birth through adult. Registration and the tracking of reading and activity completion will take place online, enabling anyone to take part in the program from home or on a mobile device. Participants will complete up to three challenges by reading and participating in a variety of activities. Everyone who completes the first and the second challenge will be entered into a drawing to win a prize and everyone who completes all three challenges will be able to choose a free book to keep forever. Don't worry if you'd rather use a paper game board, you can download one from the library's website, www.alamedafree.org . Participants may register for the summer reading challenge online at www.alamedafree.beanstack.org . The first day

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to play is June 1, the last day to register is July 21, and the last day to play is July 31. Learn more at <https://www.alamedafree.org/PROGRAMS-SERVICES/Childrens-Services/Summer-Reading-2020>

Library staff were already working on redesigning the website. The closure gave staff the opportunity to make the changes just before the big push to offer all services online. So check out our new and improved website! We've redesigned the site to make navigation easier and to better promote our services. New tab categories help library users find books, learn about e-resources and online library programs and events. Additional content has been added to help community members find resources for employment, legal help, housing, and more. Discover all that the Alameda Free Library has to offer at <https://www.alamedafree.org/Home>

Although the libraries are physically closed except for "Library Takeout", the Library is offering a wide variety of online programs for all ages. With storytimes, arts and crafts video tutorials, trivia challenges, interactive STEAM activities, online mediation, virtual book clubs, and more, we offer something for everyone. <https://www.alamedafree.org/Online-Events>

- **Your Next Read**

Until we reopen we cannot offer you physical books, but in the meantime, we would love to help you find some great books to read or listen to from our Virtual Library. Beginning Monday, June 8, the library began offering an online service to help people discover new reading material. You can tell us what type of books you like (and dislike!) and a librarian will send you a personalized reading list with at least three recommendations. Provide as much information as you would like to help us find that next special read. Check out our professional reading recommendations! <https://us.openforms.com/Form/712bc662-3515-430a-88c3-1e01d84f4cc6>

- **Sheltering in Place: Online Visual Storytelling Exhibit**

Visit our online gallery to learn how local community members have experienced sheltering in place due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Please share your experience by creating an illustration, collage, comic, photograph, brief story (up to 300 words), poem, or short video. <https://www.alamedafree.org/Sheltering-in-Place>

American Red Cross Blood Drives. The Library will be hosting our quarterly Red Cross Blood Drive on Tuesday, July 14 from noon to 5:00 p.m. Even with our doors closed the Library will continue to contribute to the urgent need for blood. Appropriate signage will be posted directing donors to the rear entrance. The Red Cross will continue to follow the same safety protocols as they followed at their May blood drive, also during the closure. Donors will have their temperature taken upon arrival and will be asked to wait in the Dewey's Café space, socially distanced, until it is their turn. Donors were very happy with the safety protocols in May and at that drive the resulted in 38 donors (30 with reservations and 8 walk-ins), collected 34 pints of blood which meant 102 blood products for patients in the hospitals. Library Blood Drive reservations always completely book up. The Red Cross is very appreciative that the Library continues to hold the blood drives during the closure as many other businesses and organizations had to cancel their scheduled blood drives and the need for blood is still very high.

Alameda Poet Laureate. The recruitment for Alameda's next Poet Laureate has begun! The qualifications and application can be found on the Library's web page. To throw your hat in the ring, an application and three original poems submitted to the Selection Committee at the Library, is all it takes

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for consideration. The application period will close on July 20 so the selection committee can do a blind reading of all the submissions to create a short list for the Mayor to select our Poet Laureate. The new Poet Laureate will be appointed at the September 15 City Council meeting. If you know of any interested Alameda poets, please encourage them to apply ~ all ages welcome (it would be cool to have a teenage Poet Laureate). <https://www.alamedafree.org/Alameda-Poet-Laureate> If any ONE of the Library Board would like to serve on the selection committee, please let me know. If no library board member wishes to participate then I will solicit a volunteer from the Friends of the Library.

Budget. The City Council adopted the mid-cycle budget on June 16. This was the time the Library was going for the “big ask” and request funding for a fully loaded open schedule at all three libraries and the necessary staffing. The COVID emergency put the brakes on that plan as the City is looking to save monies in this downturn in the economy with Alameda businesses closed and the need to offer other types of services to the community. The request for hours and staffing and a delay in hiring a previously approved FT Library Technician for the computer lab were the “cuts” made to the library budget request. Requests for one time funding of the Japantown Historical Markers and a grant match for the Link+ interlibrary loan software were the only financial requests for the library budget. With the budget adopted the Link+ installation is on and will hopefully be operating by the end of October. Work on the Japantown Historical Markers will commence sometime after the 1st of July.

Japantown Historical Markers. Representatives from the Buena Vista United Methodist Church, the Buddhist Temple of Alameda, and Rhythmix Cultural Center, along with a handful of pro-bono designers and consultants (on similar projects) will begin working on designing and installing four historical markers commemorating Alameda’s Japantown. They have met with Assistant City Manager Gerry Beaudin, Public Works Director Liam Garland, Associate Civil Engineer Laurie Kozisek and myself with their proposal. Four historical markers, each that could serve as a starting point for a walking tour of the former Japantown will be placed, at Buena Vista, the Buddhist Temple, Alameda Marketplace and the Main Library. There will be more information about this project as it moves forward.

READAlameda. The City, not completely the library, is organizing a community book club. City Public Information Officer, Sarah Henry said that members of the community were asking if the city could do something about race relations, racism, Black Lives Matter, or something,maybe a book club. So Sarah asked the Library for a little assistance in recommending three titles for the community to vote on which they would be most interested in reading and discussing. The polling was out there about a month and the winning title was announced on June 29. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America (National Book Award Winner)* by Ibram X. Kendi. There is also a young adult companion book put together by Jason Reynolds who is an award winning Young Adult author, with Ibram Kendi. Sarah is giving the community about three weeks to get the book, then we read for about three weeks and it will culminate with a big Zoom community book discussion sometime in August. The Friends of the Library are making a generous donation of \$3500 to purchase 100 copies of the adult title and 50 of the young adult title for free distribution upon request, if they cannot get the book from the library or afford to purchase their own copies. The money will also be used to purchase additional copies of the titles (physical and virtual) for the library. Any extra copies of the books leftover will be used to create “book club packs” for check out, maybe 6 copies of the same title with a discussion guide.

Friends of the Library. The Friends two (May and October) used book sales this calendar year have been canceled due to the COVID emergency/shelter in place. The book sale folks are trying to figure out

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a way to stem the tide of book donations (even though we are not soliciting donations, they show up) and sell a few. An experiment in posting pictures of the books online and doing a drive-through pickup in the library parking lot on the weekend is in the planning.

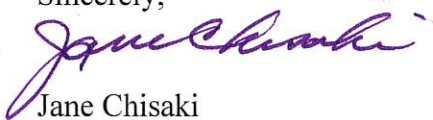
The Friends have become quite adept at hosting Zoom events. They now conduct their monthly Board meetings via Zoom and the author programs and art docent programs were really well attended in the virtual atmosphere. It seems they now draw a larger audience because you don't physically have to come to Alameda to attend the program. The Frieda Kahlo program has far exceeded their 100 person on Zoom capacity so they have upgraded their Zoom account to allow up to 500 meeting attendees!

The next Friends Board meeting will be on Monday, July 27 via Zoom at 6:30 p.m.

Alameda Reads. The Alameda Reads office has been closed since March 16. Only minimal work had been done, basically paying bills and finishing end of year reports to the State Library. Recently both Program Coordinator Barb Papik and Office Administrator Red Lustig are back in the office to see what they can offer to the learners and tutors from a distance. Barb is in touch with other literacy programs around the state.

If you have any questions about the items to be considered at the Board meeting, or if you would like to discuss these or any other items, please email me at jchisaki@alamedaca.gov or if it is not urgent, please leave me a message at 747-7747.

Sincerely,



Jane Chisaki
Library Director