

So Thankful for Summer Support at the Oakland Public Library

Jamie Turbak, Library Director

With schools out of session, summer is the Oakland Public Library's busiest season. This year, it's busier than ever as people look for ways to stretch their budgets with free activities and resources.

Library staff systemwide have planned engaging activities for all ages -- more than 500 in July alone! Lunch at the Library is also in full swing. With help from more than 30 volunteers, the library is serving free lunches to youth (ages 0-18) on weekdays at seven locations. This is a critical service for many families in Oakland.

The annual Summer Reading program for Children, Teens, and Adults continues until August 7, and it's not too late to participate. Visit oaklandlibrary.org/summer to sign up for Summer Reading, see the list of fabulous prizes, and check out the calendar of events! We have something for everyone.

The library could not do this without significant support from the community. 17 local businesses and organizations donated amazing prizes. The Friends of the Oakland Public Library and other generous funders provided the grants to pay for our all-ages programs. And volunteers at the Bookmark, with the Friends, and at the library contribute their valuable time to raise more funds and to help staff serve lunches.

Our exciting summer is only thanks to your support, and I am extremely grateful.



Jamie Turbak

Meet Isaiah Kahn, Oakland's 2026 Youth Poet Laureate

By Colleen Haikes, Friends of the OPL Director

Congratulations to Isaiah Kahn, a 16-year-old rising junior at Oakland School for the Arts, named the 2026 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate (OYPL). Oakland At-Large Councilmember Rowena Brown presented the award to Kahn on June 5, 2026 during a live event where all six finalists performed their work.

The Friends is proud to be the OYPL program's long-time funder: awarding a \$5,000 scholarship to the winner, and \$500 to each finalist.

Now in its 15th year, the OYPL is the second longest-running program of its kind in the nation. It's led by Oakland Public Library Teen Services and celebrates literacy through poetry.

Kahn cites Oakland and its culture of creativity and artistic expression as among the strongest influences on his work.

"I'm honored to represent Oakland in this way because it has shaped so much of who I am," said Kahn. "I write about my people and my city and draw inspiration from both. I couldn't imagine writing poetry anywhere else."



2026 OYPL Isaiah Kahn, Friends of the OPL President Ynez Arce and Oakland At-Large Councilmember Rowena Brown at the June 5, 2026 performances.

"Rock Star" Readers Bring the Joy of Storytime to Oakland Kids, Thanks to You!

By Colleen Haikes, Friends of the OPL Director

Every week, in preschool classrooms across Oakland, something magical happens. A volunteer opens a book, and dozens of three- and four-year-olds lean in — wide-eyed, ready. This is Books for Wider Horizons (BWH), and it exists because of your support of the Friends.

Launched in 1994 as a partnership between Oakland Public Library Youth Services and the federal Head Start program, BWH was born from a simple insight: since kids in Head Start and Child Development Centers couldn't attend library storytime, the storytime would come to them.

Today, trained volunteers visit these centers citywide, delivering 20–30 minutes of stories, songs and laughter — once a week to hundreds of kids.

At the OPL Advocates Library Mixer on May 17, longtime volunteer Randi Voorhies — a 16-year BWH reader and former middle school teacher and librarian— spoke about the program: "Of the many volunteer hats I've worn, being a story reader to children is the most joyful."

The impact runs deep. Children who might never otherwise experience a live storytime are gaining early literacy skills and a love of reading that can last a lifetime. As Randi describes it: "The children are like sponges soaking up new words, quickly memorizing rhymes, songs, and movements and anticipating story outcomes."



Books for Wider Horizons Volunteer Randi Voorhies reading to one of her grandchildren.

None of this happens without support. The Friends helps fund the training, coordination, and resources that make BWH possible. Your Friends donations directly sustain this program and others like it across the OPL system.

Two ways you can make a difference:

Give. Your continued support to the Friends helps ensure BWH and other vital Library programs continue to thrive. Visit fopl.org to donate today.

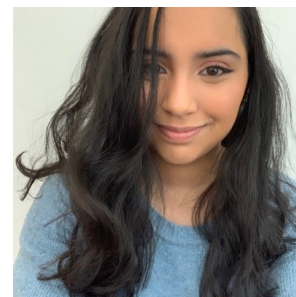
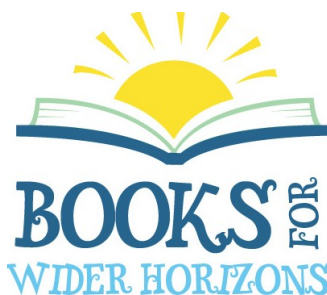
Volunteer. The application for fall volunteers is open through August 17 on the OPL's website. BWH provides training, no experience required. Randi knows some folks may be thinking, "Yikes, sing? I can't do that." But the children are a supportive and forgiving audience. She says, "You'll feel like a rock star." Visit oaklandlibrary.org/BWH to learn more!

Thank you BWH for bringing the joy of reading to Oakland's youngest community members!

Welcome, Fatima!

The Friends of the OPL is pleased to announce the election of Fatima Yousuf as a new Director.

Fatima is a PhD student at the UC Berkeley Space Sciences Laboratory and a Bay Area native. A lifelong library user, she believes libraries are vital community institutions that provide open access to information and resources, promote literacy, and offer safe, welcoming spaces where people of all backgrounds and income levels can learn, connect, and thrive. Outside of graduate school, she volunteers as a baker with Cake4Kids and enjoys crocheting, painting, and reading.



Fatima Yousuf

Get to Know Your Grants

By Sara DuBois, OPL Coordinator of Grants & Volunteers

This summer, OPL librarians decided to try something new: a special Summer Reading prize for program finishers in all three age groups (children, teen, and adults.)

Like many new ideas, this one would not have come to be without support of the Friends of the OPL. Thanks to the 2025-26 Annual Grants approved last fall, OPL purchased 5,000 tote bags with a special "Summer at the Oakland Public Library" message. While supplies last, patrons who complete the Summer Reading program can pick up one up at their local library.

Staff anticipate that these prizes will become coveted collectables, and that they will help to promote the program in the community. Undoubtedly, they will also help library regulars to carry more books!

To learn more about how support for the Friends impacts OPL, contact Sara at (510) 238-6572 or sdubois@oaklandlibrary.org.



Upcoming Main Library Events

Find more at oaklandlibrary.org/events.

Lunchtime Jazz

Enjoy Oaktown Jazz Workshops' Performance Ensemble as they share jazz classics in the beautiful Main Library lobby.

Friday, July 17 and July 24, 1:00-2:00pm
oaklandlibrary.org/jazz

Drawing with Alan Leon

Come ready to draw with this versatile artist!

Friday, July 17 and July 24, 2:00-4:00pm
oaklandlibrary.org/AlanLeon

Exhibit: Local News Dioramas

Admire an amazing array of dioramas created by the library community.

July 17 - October 3
oaklandlibrary.org/diorama

Meet the Author: Dorothy Lazard

Celebrate the release of *Behind the Desk at the Main: A Librarian's Memoir*.

Wednesday, August 19 at 6:00pm
oaklandlibrary.org/DorothyLazard

Giving Every gift can be a tribute gift! Just include your message with the donation. fopl.org/donate

- In memory of Tamra C. Hege, former Friends of OPL board member and lifelong library advocate.
- In honor of Brian Walsh, from Stephanie Walsh
- In memory of Gige Coba who used all library resources and supported OPL as an all community serving resource, from Leslie Colón.
- In memory of Carolyn Burd, from Eric and Marion Linda
- In memory of Carolyn Burd, from Inho Chang
- In loving memory of Carolyn Burd, from David Himmelstein
- In memory of Roger Jennings, from Kimberly Lum
- In memory of Genevieve Katz
- In memory of Dolores Lopes, from Marilynne Homitz
- In honor of 80th Birthdays, Our Book Group Women: Amy, Cathy M, Debbie and Melinda. Celebrating 80 wonderful years of life, laughter, and stories- both lived and read. For decades your friendship has been wise, fun and full of heart. May the next chapters be as rich. Love from your Book Group.
- In memory of Barbara Duncan, our beautiful college friend for 60 years, who was always building community connections and being human in every way possible. She loved children! With love and gratitude, Marilyn Kaufman, Marie Lesh, Linda Race Neugent, and Judy Perry



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We welcome your feedback & comments:

info@fopl.org

If the date on your mailing label is **6-30-2026** or earlier, PLEASE RENEW TODAY!

THE BOOKMARK

— BOOKSTORE —

933 Broadway, Oakland, CA 94607

(510) 444-0473 | www.fopl.org

All proceeds benefit the Oakland Public Library.

MONTHLY MEMBER SALES

Members receive 50% off on Saturday
and everyone receives 30% off on Sunday.

July 18-19

August 15-16

September 19-20

Bulk Buyers (purchasing 100+ items) are
welcome on the Monday after each sale.

NEWS FROM THE BOOKMARK

In February, longtime Friend Valerie Villanueva donated a Little Free Library to the Bookmark. Bookmark Manager Erin Rivero reports that it's now off to a new home -- generously provided by volunteer and donor Francheska Herrada -- so that the store can install a new unit. The incoming Little Free Library was awarded to the Bookmark by Penguin Random House in honor of author Cathy Park Hong and her book *Minor Feelings*. Come see it later this summer!



Erin Rivero, *Operations Manager* * Cheryl Liquori, *Volunteer Manager* * Lio Min, *Online Sales Manager*

To learn more about Friends of the Oakland Public Library, visit fopl.org.

The Friends of the Oakland Public Library is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Our tax ID is 94-2553734. All contributions are tax deductible.