

Libraries a place for personal transformation

By Jill Fuller

Transform. Verb (transitive): to change completely the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that thing or person is improved.

When I think of the word “transform,” I think of skyscrapers transforming a city skyline. I think of ugly little caterpillars turning into lovely butterflies. I think of inventions and scientific discoveries that have completely revolutionized society. To be honest, though, these are all large-scale examples that don’t accurately represent the many ways transformation occurs in our world.

Change can be dramatic and sudden, but usually it occurs gradually, in the quiet places where you would least expect it. Like at the public library. Here, positive personal change happens for people as problems are solved, needs are met, and new things are discovered. A little boy’s confi-

dence grows after he reads to a therapy dog. A grandmother passes on a time-honored tradition to her granddaughter at a sewing workshop. A woman gains lifesaving knowledge after taking an online Handling Medical Emergencies class. A recent widower finds books to help him through his depression. These are real stories from people living right here. Transformation, improvement, betterment — libraries make this happen every day in Waukesha County.

That fact is worth celebrating. In February, all 24 libraries in Waukesha and Jefferson counties are having a monthlong celebration of how libraries transform lives and communi-



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ties. The celebration includes programs hosted throughout the month at each library that exemplify how libraries offer people new perspectives and ideas, encourage discussion, and provide a safe space to learn and grow.

For example, the Brookfield Public Library will hold a presentation and discussion on historic segregation in Milwaukee schools on Feb. 26, while the Oconomowoc Public Library is inviting kids to learn more about wildlife rehabilitation by meeting owls and other birds on Feb. 24. All of the libraries will be starting conversations on social media about the ways that libraries transform, while local leaders, business owners, and officials from across both counties are showing their support for libraries by posing for READ posters, which will be displayed in each library.

Finally, we’re collecting YOUR transformation stories. Whether large and dra-

matic, or small and modest, everyone has a story about what the library has done for them. You can tell us how the library has changed your life at www.tinyurl.com/my-library-story. And we invite you to stop into your library this February! Go ahead and take a look around, talk to the library staff, and watch your library in action. You may be surprised to find that transformation is everywhere.

The late Robin Williams once said, “No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world.” Here at the library, we truly believe that. Do you?

Find out more about the libraries’ Transform campaign this February by visiting your local library or going to www.bridgeslibrarysystem.org/libraries-transform.

(Jill Fuller is the coordinator of marketing & communications for Bridges Library System.)