

Libraries still offering Summer Library Program — just virtually

By Jill Fuller

Whether you've had to cancel your vacation or will be missing those delicious cream puffs at the Wisconsin State Fair, your summer plans probably look a little different this year. Thankfully, summer still has so much to offer, like hot afternoons playing in the sprinkler, eating ice cream cones, and tossing a ball around the backyard.

There's something else you can still plan on: your library.

The Summer Library Program is back for kids, teens, and adults and this time, it's online! Everything you love about Summer Library Program, from the reading logs and prizes to the summer performers, are still available this summer so you and your family can make reading a priority.

Before I give you the details, let's back up and take a look at why a Summer Library Program is so important for both kids and adults. For many kids, the summer months away from school lead to "the summer slide." The summer slide is defined as a learning loss among students, primarily those in elementary and middle school, due to reduced intellectual engagement throughout the summer break. Reading is one of the best ways to beat the summer slide, as it builds vocabulary, critical thinking skills, and comprehension. This sets a foundation for kids to build upon when school starts back up in the

fall.

For adults, studies show that reading benefits the brain and mental health. For example, a study on stress management found that just 30 minutes of reading lowered blood pressure and heart rate, while another study found that reading actually strengthens the network of signals in our brains. Reading also helps improve our empathy for others, which is a "muscle" we could all work on. Stepping into the lives and experiences of people different from you can be powerful and transformative, and books are a perfect way to do that.

The Summer Library Program rewards you and your kids for reading, which incentivizes you to read even more!

This year, your public library is using an online program called Beanstack. Beanstack is a fun and easy way to track which books you read and participate in activity challenges to keep busy all summer, like going on a hike or making fun crafts.

If you have a library card with a library in Waukesha or Jefferson counties, you can get started right away by downloading the free Beanstack app from the app store or accessing it with the web address unique to your library. (Check with your library for the URL.) Once you've opened it, search for your



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library and enter your library card number to create your account and start the reading challenge! As the summer progresses, you can earn badges and win prizes, just as you would with the regular Summer Library Program. You can find more information about using Beanstack on our website: www.bridgeslibrarysystem.org/beanstack-questions.

Our libraries are also offering virtual programs and summer performers to keep the fun going, so make sure to visit your library's website and social media pages to find details.

Don't worry, the library is not just available online. Most libraries in Waukesha and Jefferson counties have expanded their services and opened their doors again, so you still have the option of visiting the library in-person. Regardless of how your summer has changed this year, your library is still here for you. Make this a summer of reading, learning, and growing with the Summer Library Program!

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