

For the Week of March 21, 2022

Manager's Message

Aaron Frank, Town Manager

When COVID came to Vermont, the Selectboard asked me to spend more time on the newsletter to keep people connected and aware of Town and public health issues. With help from Kathi O'Reilly, our Economic Development Director, we combed through state and federal guidance on resources and issues, added this information to newsletters and social media, and created a special COVID services page to share individual, community and business assistance information.

In Spring 2021, we revised an existing position serving the Selectboard, Manager, and Human Resources to focus more on communications and maintain this increased effort while we brought services back up to pre-COVID levels. We are pleased to have found the right person to serve in this new role, Alicia Tebeau-Sherry.



Looking to learn more about your Town's services? *Town News Interviews* will be included in the Town Newsletter and feature conversations about town services with staff and volunteers in the Colchester community!

Town News Interviews

So Much More Than Books!

*An interview with Kelly McCagg, Colchester's Burnham Memorial Library Director
by Alicia Tebeau-Sherry, Town Manager's Office, Communications Coordinator*

Having to continuously adapt to the new normal of COVID times, Kelly shared with me how the library and its staff have adjusted, and provided a glimpse into the many services the library offers to the Colchester community that they value so much.

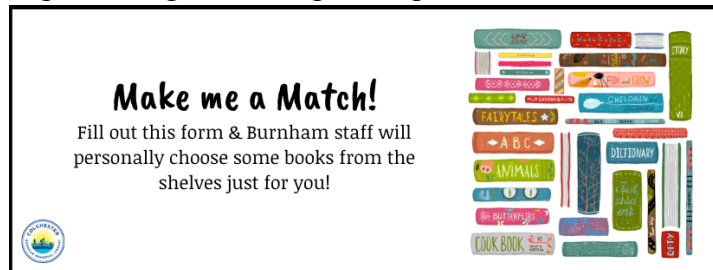
ATS: To familiarize others about you and the Burnham Library, can you tell me about what you and the library provide to the Town of Colchester?

KM: Libraries serve as an equalizing agent in communities. It doesn't matter what your income or education level is, your sexual orientation or identity, or your race or ethnicity—everyone is welcome. We work very hard to provide the same level of excellent customer service to every person that walks in our library's door or calls us on the phone.



The Burnham Memorial Library

As for services, there are the library services people are familiar with, like receiving answers to reference questions, browsing physical collections, and utilizing literacy programming, but we also provide support through services such as technology assistance, AARP tax, and Readers' Advisory, which means we match people up with the next book they may want to read. We refer to a segment of this program as our "Book Match," which we started during COVID after people began calling and asking for bags of books that could be ready to pick up. We found our patrons



Banner for the Reader's Advisory program

very happy with this program because they often found new authors they enjoyed. We have a reference form for interested customers that can be completed online. In the end, our list of services could go on and on, and we see ourselves as a welcoming place for community members to come together.

ATS: What might the Colchester community not know about the library and what it offers?

KM: Burnham is so much more than books! We have a digital collection that we share with other libraries, and it includes over 35,000 items. People can borrow all sorts of items, such as maker kits, attraction passes, or laptops. You can now register for a library card online too, which we started doing during the beginning of COVID, but have continued to offer. Also, while most people may be familiar with our story times for young children, we do offer programming for all ages, all the way through retirement age.

ATS: When did you start working for the library, and what does a typical day look like for you now as the Director?

KM: I began my career as a children's librarian, but I came here 8 ½ years ago looking for some new challenges after working at my prior job for 13 ½ years in New York state.

Today, you can find me arriving to the library about an hour before the rest of the staff, hopefully giving me some time to settle-in and check emails and other messages. Like many department heads would say, I usually have a long to-do list that is interrupted by questions from staff that need my attention or programming ideas that require my guidance.

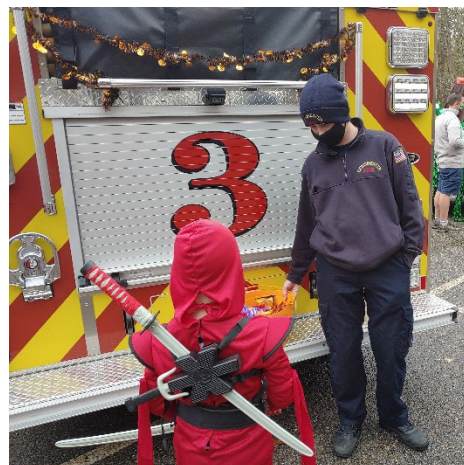
Prior to COVID, I spent 9 hours working on circulation desks; however, when COVID hit and we had to furlough a bunch of our staff, I began working the upstairs desk all the time. Now that we're back to somewhat normal, I'm working on bigger projects. I'm not at the desk much at all anymore, and I do miss that, but there are larger issues that need to be dealt with. I do still lead a monthly book discussion group and help with some other of our adult programming, so I'm kind of running around often, putting out fires so to speak, and helping staff.



Completed Fleece Rag Wreath from the Adult Craft Bag program

ATS: You said during COVID you worked at the first-floor circulation desk more often and that you miss it now. What is it that you miss about working in that area of the library?

KM: I miss working with the public more—I really like that. Because we were working from home half the time for a couple months in the beginning of COVID under the Governor's Orders, we had a cellphone that many of our calls would go to. I had the phone most of the time, and I was usually answering calls from 10 AM to 6 PM Monday through Saturday. I was answering reference questions, finding and collecting books for readers' advisory—we could probably write a book on all the reference questions librarians get! I really liked doing that though, helping people find new authors and books, because it is something I don't get to do a lot of nowadays.



Trick or Treaters during the Trunk or Treat event

ATS: Recently, how has the Burnham Memorial Library been developing its programs and services?

KM: Basically, we've been trying to respond and evolve to the new COVID environment, asking ourselves how we can best continue to serve the community and meet people where they are at. People are not going out as much anymore, which is the safe thing to do, but we used to have a lot of people that would come in and hang out for a couple hours, sit by the fire, read the paper, talk to somebody, or work on the puzzle—the library was just a place to come and be. People aren't doing that now, which is smart, so we're finding other ways to connect with them. We've been having to throw things out there and see if they work or not; that's pretty much what we've been doing for the last two years, and some things we have found to be really successful. For example, to our surprise, adult craft bags have been hugely successful, which I never thought would be, but people love them and we can't make enough of them! So, we just keep throwing ideas out, and what sticks, we try to keep doing, and if it doesn't, we come up with something new.



Decorated car trunk at the Trunk or Treat event

ATS: And when you're brainstorming these ideas, do you work with staff or do community members come forward with ideas? How do you find out what they'd be interested in?

KM: We talk to people as much as we can. It was a lot easier when people hung out here and we'd be able to have casual conversations about what they'd be interested in, but now we do a lot of networking with other libraries to find out what they're doing and what is working for them. Sometimes if something works in one community, even if they are close-by with a similar demographic, it

won't necessarily work here, but we'll still give it a try. Sometimes programs that wouldn't have been successful prior to COVID would actually be successful now. For example, we had been noticing people coming in and working on the usual puzzle we have set up, so we created this program called "Puzzle Palooza" where people came in and raced to see who could complete these puzzles, and the event got filled! So, we're at a point now where we're open to trying a variety of things, as long as they are affordable. We do still try to ask patrons when they're coming in, "hey, we were thinking about trying this, what do you think?" and that has been helpful too.

ATS: You've touched on several successful programs that the library has completed in the past two years, despite COVID's persistence. What are you most proud of that the Burnham Memorial Library and its staff have completed in these difficult times?

KM: I'm really proud of our "Trunk or Treat" program because we brought together a lot of community organizations. We were able to collaborate with police, rescue, fire, local businesses, and civic organizations, and our parking lot was packed full with decorated vehicles for Halloween. We had hundreds of families come out to get candy with their kids—we used to have a big Halloween party, so it was just one of those things that worked really well because people were looking for something normal to do.



Trick or Treaters during the Trunk or Treat event

We are also really happy with and proud of our Storywalk at Village Park, which was a collaboration between us and the Parks and Recreation Department. We had started it during COVID with just some garden stakes hammered into the ground and laminated pages from story books, but with funding from our Trustees and our Friends of the Library group, we were able to purchase permanent displays so that we are able to change the pages out all year round. As soon as the displays came in, the Parks Department was great and had them installed the next day. And it's not just popular with kids—we had an interaction with an older couple when we were out marking the trails for the display, and they said they walk the trail every day and really enjoy it too!



Visitors reading a page along the library's Story Walk

ATS: As discussed earlier, COVID has had an impact on the library. How has Colchester's Burnham Memorial Library overcome obstacles resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic?

KM: So, we closed our doors March 17th, 2020, and shortly after we furloughed six employees, so it was myself and the assistant director who were left. Staff didn't start coming back until July, and we just had to start developing new ways of offering programs, circulation and tech services—we had to re-imagine everything that we offered to people.

We got some great take-aways from the experience, and hopefully when we're in a more stable time, we'll continue to do those things like weekly staff meetings, adult craft bags, and PJ Story Time. While all our kids programming moved online, and we know most people are sick of that, our PJ Story Time was great because our patrons' kids could be all ready for bed, and they wouldn't have to take them outside. In fact, we had some families that moved out of Colchester and they were still logging-in, which was great to see. We actually had one family move overseas, and even though it was morning for them, they were still logging in to see Miss Hannah and Miss Pam. So that's one we'll still keep online. We recognize all of this is difficult, and this last surge was especially hard on everybody, but like I said, we try to do things to lighten the load and keep things in perspective.



Informational sign placed in a new Pollinator Garden

ATS: Now, turning to the future a bit, what can we expect to hear about coming up for the Burnham Memorial Library?

KM: We are hoping to start a Seed Library this fall, which is where gardeners can come and swap seeds. This program will be prefaced by some pollinator garden programming in the summer, inspired by some local master gardeners who volunteered and upturned our front garden into a pollinator garden last year, which they may be expanding upon again this summer. We'll also be starting on our new strategic plan because it expired during COVID, and for that we'll need community input, so we'll be doing some more outreach. We're hoping to add streaming services to our digital collection as well, and as we add back more services hours, there will be a survey out to community members for their input—we don't want to just go back to the hours we had before COVID, but instead ask what days they'd like to see us open later or what day we could be open earlier in the morning.



A young reader enjoying the Story Walk

ATS: You also coordinate the Library Board of Trustees—what does this committee do for the Town? Are there open member positions, volunteer opportunities, or other possibilities for the community to become involved with this committee?

KM: The Library Board of Trustees is like an advisory position—they make library policy, assist the Town Manager in my annual review, and are very active in writing the strategic plan. We usually have a student member as well, but that position was left vacant this past year because of COVID, but that may be an option again soon. Seats on the

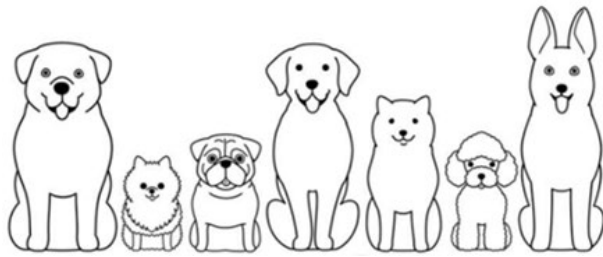
board are filled for 5-year terms, and right now all the seats are filled, but this type of involvement can be something to keep in mind for the future.

ATS: What is the best thing about working for the Burnham Memorial Library and representing a part of the Town of Colchester?

KM: We have a great staff—people are dedicated and knowledgeable, and we have a lot of fun working together. Colchester has a reputation for providing an exceptional level of service and we are honored to be a part of that.

ATS: How can the community keep up with the library and its services?

KM: We have lots of ways! We have two Facebook pages—the Burnham Memorial Library and the Burnham Memorial Library-Youth Services—we're on Instagram, and we have a newsletter that goes out about every other month that people can sign up for. We post to FPF about every week with upcoming programs and things like that too.



**Reminder: License your dog before
April 1st!**

For more information, visit
<https://colchestervt.gov/323/Dog-Licensing> or
call 802-264-5520.

Upcoming Town Meetings

Selectboard: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 at 6:30 pm at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Residents are welcome to attend the meeting or alternatively send a note, up to 1,000 words, to TownManager@colchestervt.gov with “Citizens to be Heard” in the Subject and their name and address in the body of the email. The email will be shared with the entire Selectboard prior to the meeting and included in the information packet at the next meeting (as the information packet for the current meeting is sent out along with the agenda).

- Watch the Meeting Online via Live Stream: <http://lcatv.org/live-stream-2>
- Agenda: www.bit.ly/Colchester-SB-Agendas

Planning Commission: Tuesday, April 5, at 7 pm at the Colchester Town Offices. Meeting to discuss East Lakeshore Drive.

Subscribe to the Town Newsletter: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/jkMAO2v>

For more information or to comment, call 802-264-5509 or email
townmanager@colchestervt.gov