

# FRIENDS' NEWS

MARCH 2026



FRIENDS OF THE BELLINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I near the end of a three-year term as the president of the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library, I am so proud of the work we have done to support the library and literacy in our community. From ongoing programs like Summer Reading and Whatcom Reads to newer ones like the Digital Storytelling program and the Book Club Social, we have been able to fund all of the requests that the library makes and help them to build their collection.

We do this through our three-times yearly book sales, which require a lot of hours of building up an inventory, getting the sales organized and then turning the Lecture Room into a bookstore in one day! We are so grateful for all the volunteers who put in hours behind the scenes getting everything ready and for the great response we get from volunteers when it is time to sign up for working at the sale. We work hard and we have a good time and it all goes toward a very worthy cause—our library!

I am particularly grateful for the board members and other backroom folks who keep it all going on a weekly basis and make sure the jobs get done. Vicki Nulle is in charge of inventory and sending books to Better World Books, Kathie Wilson and her team get things ready for the Nearly New sales area, and Jennie Tuckerman and Leigh Ann Giles take care of the Display Case. Chris Johnsen coordinates our volunteers, Brigid Wilson and Ashtin Shepard are our membership coordinators, Jane Brooks makes sure that the word gets out about our sales, Carol Comeau meets monthly with the Trustees and is our coordinator for Little Free Libraries, Wendy Westgate does our newsletter, and the "team of Kates"--Kate Riordan and Kate Frazee--take care of all of our financial needs.

When we do our sales, we have fantastic supervisors who make sure everything goes smoothly and the team of Trudie Goodman and Leslie Guelker-Cone, who head up the kitchen and make sure the volunteers all stay well-fed. Thank you so much to all of you!

All this hard work has resulted in some amazing numbers at our sales. In our most recent sale alone we made \$21,000. Our Nearly New and Display Case sales add a significant amount to our treasury as well as our sales to our online book partner, Better World Books. In addition, we have been the recipient of some large donations from the community (many of them anonymous). In 2025, our board voted to give \$225,000 to the library renovation project. With some good financial planning, our board voted in January of this year to increase that amount to \$325,000. We are so pleased to be able to help the library make a much-needed upgrade of our library facility, including the children's library.

At our meeting in April, our current vice-president Treasure Samuel will take over as president. She is excited to be in leadership at this time of change with the library renovation and I'm so glad to be leaving the leadership team in good hands. I'm looking forward to a little less "hands-on" time but will stay involved with the Friends and the board. It's been a lot of work, but it has certainly been worth it and I'm very grateful for having had the opportunity to do it. Thank you all!



## NEARLY NEW BOOKS AND DISPLAY CASES

**Nearly New:** Don't forget we have our Nearly New area on the main floor of the Central Library.

You can shop for high-quality, barely used, nearly new books, children's books, and puzzles whenever the library is open. Prices range from \$2.00 to \$5.00.



**Display Case:** If you are looking for something special or unusual, check out our Display Case located on the lower level of the Central Library next to the Free Bookshelves.

Here you will find classics, rare and collectable books, as well as books about Bellingham and Whatcom County history.

You might also find tarot cards, special edition boxed books and out of the ordinary items. The display case is locked but there are instructions on how to contact the Friends to set up an appointment to view display case items.

## UPCOMING BOOK SALE DATES

Join us for our two remaining Book Sales in 2026! This is your chance to acquire gently used books in fantastic shape. Think ahead to upcoming birthday and holiday gifts you need to find—you will undoubtedly be able to handle all your gift purchases here!

### **May 20-23 (4-day sale)**

Wednesday: 10 am - 6 pm

Thursday: 10 am - 6 pm

Friday: 10 am - 6 pm, half-price

Saturday: 10 am - 1 pm, \$5/bag

### **September 24-26 (3-day sale)**

Thursday: 10 am - 6 pm

Friday: 10 am - 6 pm, half-price

Saturday: 10 am - 3 pm, \$5/bag



Our book sales are always well attended.

For those who prefer less crowded conditions, it's best to avoid the first and last days, and to arrive after 11:30. Book sales take place in the downstairs lecture room of Central Library.

There are many opportunities to volunteer at Book Sales—with the added perk of being invited to attend the pre-sale!

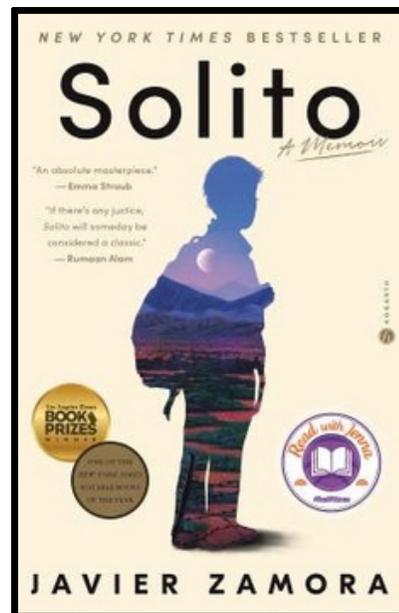
## WHATCOM READS 2026

The 2026 Whatcom READS selection is *Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora. In his debut New York Times bestselling memoir, Zamora retells his nine-week odyssey across Guatemala, Mexico, and eventually through the Sonoran Desert as a nine-year-old in 1999. He travelled unaccompanied, by boat, bus and foot. After a coyote abandoned his group in Oaxaca, Zamora managed to make it to Arizona with the aid of other migrants.

Local readers have shown high interest in the title and this year's events. The following are registration numbers for Whatcom READS events in January, February, and March 2026 at venues across Whatcom County, many of which reached maximum capacity:

- 125 - Film Screening of Desert Angel at the Pickford Film Center
- 35 - American Memoir: From Autobiography to *Solito* to Cajitas writing class at Whatcom Community College
- 50 - Nепantla: Exploring Chicano/Chicana Art with Jake Prendez and Judy Avitia at Jansen Art Center
- 71 - Future of Borders with Laurie Trautman and Ted Alden at Whatcom Museum
- 25 - Celebration of Unofficial Languages at Village Books in Fairhaven
- 40 - The Sonoran Desert: Biodiversity and the Perils of Human Passage with Saff Killingsworth virtual event
- 50 - Whatcom WRITES group reading at Village Books in Fairhaven
- 50 - Whatcom WRITES group reading at Village Books in Lynden
- 14 - Art, Creativity and Immigrant Youth with Lakeya Afolalu at Ferndale Public Library
- 36 - Exploring Salvadoran Cuisine, Its History and Traditions at Bellingham Technical College
- 14 - Green Expectations: A Poetry Workshop with Claudia Castro Luna at Village Books in Fairhaven
- 5 - Ilusiones Verdes: Un Taller de Poesia con Claudia Castro Luna at Village Books in Fairhaven
- 77 - Celebrating Salvadoran Art Through Painting at 5 WCLS libraries
- 750 - Javier Zamora author event at Bellingham High School (for students)
- 300 - Javier Zamora author event at Pioneer Pavilion in Ferndale
- 1500 - Javier Zamora author event at Mount Baker Theatre

Whatcom READS is a partnership between all the public and academic libraries in Whatcom County. Funding from the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library is integral to its annual success.



Borrow *Solito: A Memoir* as a book, eBook, or audiobook from the Bellingham Public Library or Whatcom County Library System. Or purchase a copy from Village Books, which donates 10 percent of each sale to Whatcom READS.

## LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BY REBECCA JUDD

What an amazing year we had in 2025! Bring the Light was our theme for January. Friends funding allowed the Library to open the new year with a "Songs from the Heart" flute concert performed by Peter Ali and enjoyed by 72 people in the Central Library Lecture Room on Jan. 4.

The 2025 Whatcom READS title was *No Two Persons* by Erica Bauermeister. The keynote event on Friday, March 14 at Mount Baker Theatre included six local musical acts curated by The Bushwick Book Club Seattle, as well as an author talk and Q&A. The theatre recorded 1,134 free tickets reserved for the event, and estimated an attendance of 750. BTV also reported 118 livestream views on the night of the event. After the event, Erica Bauermeister wrote, "I just want to thank you for last night. As life-gifts go, I think it's right up there at the top of the list. Hearing that incredible music, seeing the community that all your work gathered together, feeling the comfort of knowing every moment of the evening was going to go smoothly. Wow." The culmination of the evening was the announcement of the 2026 Whatcom READS title, *Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora.

Library Giving Day, April 1, was a successful kick-off to the \$3.5 million private fundraising effort for the Bellingham Central Library Renovation Phase 2 project. Multiple gifts and pledges from the Friends are making a significant impact on this campaign to refresh and modernize interior spaces for youth and staff.

Our 2025 Summer Reading program for children had 1,596 finishers, age birth-12 years, which is 54 more than the previous year. In addition, 122 activity cards were turned in by teens age 13-18, and 341 adults turned in activity cards, which is 69 more than last year and included 26 staff participants. Friends funding also allowed us to print new Summer Reading Super Star yard signs in 2025.

Fall was marked by many opportunities for connection. The Library partnered with the Pickford Film Center for three showings of the documentary [The Librarians](#). BPL staff tabled in the lobby of The Pickford on each date and had meaningful conversations with attendees before and after the film. Our second annual Staff Learning Day allowed opportunities for professional growth and skill building. And the work of the Bellingham Public Library team was honored with a 2025 Peace Builder Award for Public Service, presented by the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center.

Friends funding also allowed the Library to present two large community events in November 2025. Listen Deeply: Community Voices Film Fest gathered a capacity crowd of 180 community members on Nov. 1 to listen to and honor 15 local storytellers at Hotel Leo in Downtown Bellingham. Two weeks later, on Nov. 15, a full house of 174 also attended our inaugural Book Club Social at Hotel Leo to celebrate book club culture and joy. Participants met local authors, gathered new title suggestions, captured ideas to enrich their book group gatherings, and enjoyed a special book buffet.

In December we concluded our year with a special gift to staff, thanks to the Friends: new BPL branded hats! Each staff member was offered either a beanie cap or a ballcap that can be worn at work or at special events to share their Library enthusiasm. Our planning throughout the year also set us up to begin 2026 with a new Winter Reading Challenge for Adults, a sold-out author visit by Isabel Wilkerson at Mount Baker Theatre, and full registration for the 2026 Whatcom READS events, all supported by generous Friends funding.

Thank you to the Friends. We appreciate you!

## TREASURER'S REPORT

The Friends of the Bellingham Public Library had the following financial activity January 1 - December 31, 2025:

### INCOME

<b>Book Sales</b>	\$ 57,894
Nearly New Books .....	\$ 15,668
Display Case Books .....	\$ 2,082
Miscellaneous Books .....	\$ 3,668
Online Book Sales .....	\$ 3,496
Bags, Bumper Stickers, & T-Shirts .....	\$ 882
Membership .....	\$ 5,723
Donations & Memorials .....	\$ 76,931
Dividends and Interest .....	\$ 12,865
<b>Total Income:</b> .....	<b>\$ 179,209</b>

### BPL Major Funding

Summer Reading Programs.....	\$ 12,750
Adult Programming.....	\$ 2,000
Teen Programming.....	\$ 1,500
Youth and Family Programming.....	\$ 2,500
Community Relations and Outreach.....	\$ 4,500
Whatcom Reads .....	\$ 7,500
<b>Total BPL Expenses:</b> .....	<b>\$ 30,750</b>

### BPL Collections Support

Board & Picture Books.....	\$ 5,000
Book Clubs.....	\$ 3,500
Collection Program Support.....	\$10,000
Here and Now Collection.....	\$11,500
Wonderbooks.....	\$10,000
<b>Total BPL Collections Support:</b> .....	<b>\$40,000</b>

### Other Library Funding

Digital Storytelling.....	\$ 500
Giving Day Matching Funds.....	\$ 5,000
Whatcom Community Foundation.....	\$ 25,000
<b>Total Other BPL Expenses</b> .....	<b>\$ 30,500</b>

### FOBPL Administrative Expenses

Insurance .....	\$ 2,520
Bank fees/Square charges.....	\$ 1,193
Fees and Licenses.....	\$ 185
Meetings .....	\$ 74
Supplies.....	\$ 201
Miscellaneous.....	\$ 591
Special Events.....	\$ 950
<b>Total FOBPL Admin Expenses</b> .....	<b>\$ 5,714</b>

### FOBPL Book Sale Expenses

Supplies.....	\$ 611
Advertising.....	\$ 3,189
<b>Total Book Sale Expenses</b> .....	<b>\$ 3,800</b>

## TREASURER'S REPORT, CONT.

**BPL Remodel Expenses**.....\$ 1,120

### BPL Special Projects

All-Staff Learning Day.....	\$ 1,500
Staff Recognition.....	\$ 1,609
Wifi Hotspot Replacement.....	\$ 5,000
<b>Total BPL Special Projects</b> .....	<b>\$ 8,109</b>

**FOBPL Purchases: T-Shirts**.....\$ 620

## 2026 FUNDING PLANS

### BPL Programs:

Adult Programming	\$2,500
Summer Reading	\$8,000
Teen Programming	\$500
Whatcom Reads	\$7,500
Books for Babies	\$5,000
Events	\$13,000

### Collections Support:

Book Clubs	\$3,500
Board and Picture Books	\$3,500
Collection Program Support	\$5,000
Here and Now Collection	\$7,500
Wonderbooks	\$7,000

### Community Relations & Outreach:

Community Outreach	\$1,000
Library Branded Shirts for Staff	\$3,000
Lived Experience	\$1,000

### Special Projects:

All-Staff Learning Day	\$1,500
Staff Recognition	\$1,500

**Total:** **\$71,000**

## Library Giving Day - April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026

Every year Bellingham Public Library participates in a nation-wide fundraising campaign, Library Giving Day. This year, the event kicks off April 1<sup>st</sup> with the fundraising focus of revitalizing the Bellingham Central Library's aging ground floor, including the Children's department and a relocated Teen space. The hope is to inspire our local youth with spaces for children and teens that are modern, safe, clean, inviting, age appropriate, and ADA accessible. Check out Bellingham Public Library's website for Giving Day's donation details and look for emails and social media posts as well.

## SPECIAL DONATIONS

The Friends of the Bellingham Public Library are very grateful for the monetary donations we receive from members of our community. These donations help to support our work and made it possible this year to contribute more than we had planned to the upcoming library renovation. Thanks to all of you who have donated this year:

Scout Mitchell and Jack Kimmes: \$5,000  
Chris Crosser and Kirk Roberts: \$180  
John Knies (in memory of Kay Knies): \$1,000  
Sherry Holtzman: \$100  
Kendra Bradford and Todd Shuster: \$200  
PayPal Giving Fund: \$154.69  
Anonymous Donor: \$5,000  
Anonymous Donor: \$300  
Anonymous Donor: \$1,000  
Anonymous Donor: \$50  
Anonymous Donor: \$5,000

## ANNUAL MEETING 2026

### Join us at our Annual Membership Meeting!

We will be holding our Annual Membership Meeting of the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> from 10-12 in the Lecture Room of the Central Library Branch. We will begin with cookies, coffee, and tea and some time to greet other members. This will be followed by a short business meeting where members will be able to vote on the slate of officers and board members.

We are excited to have as our guest speaker this year library director Rebecca Judd. She will get us all up to date on the library renovation that will be happening in late 2026 or early 2027 and give us a picture of what the library services will look like during the renovation. We're also very excited to welcome back Adult Services Librarian Katie Bray, who will give us some great new book recommendations.

Be sure to put your name in for our raffle basket drawing, which will give five lucky winners each a basket with a book, a gift card for a local bookstore, bookmarks and book pencils, and chocolate! You'll also have a chance to renew your membership or to join us if you're not already a member. Hope to see you there!



## BOARD MEMBERS

### Friends of the Bellingham Public Library Board Members 2026-2027

**President:** Scout Mitchell

**Vice-President:** Treasure Samuel

**Secretary:** Joan Hollingsworth

**Treasurer:** Kate Riordan

#### Members-At-Large:

Jane Brooks: Publicity

Carol Comeau: Trustees Rep & Little Free Library  
Coordinator

Leigh Ann Giles: Book Committee Rep

Chris Johnsen: Volunteers

Wendy Westgate: Newsletter

Brigid Wilson & Ashtin Shepard: Membership

#### Board Meeting Schedule

We meet five times a year in January, March, May, September, and November on the third Wednesday of the month from 1:00-3:00 in the Lecture Room of the Central Library Branch. Our meetings are open to all members of the Friends.

## BPL BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

BY REBECCA CRAVEN, CHAIR

This past year saw us say farewell to our long-time Chair, Rick Osen, and completing the application process and appointment of Shirin Deylani, who joined us in February 2025. Early in 2026, at our request, the City Council appointed our Vice Chair Kristy Van Ness to a second full 5-year term on the Board.

In February, we discussed at length how we could leverage the earnings from the Bragg-Muldrow endowment held by the Whatcom Community Foundation to be used for the Central Library renovation. We requested that WCF facilitate this by transferring \$1,589,093 (or the current value) from the endowment's earnings account into a short-term investment account, ensuring funds are available for project-related expenses if/when needed. The documents setting up that agreement were signed in March.

Whatcom Reads, with Erica Bauermeister, author of *No Two Persons*, was again a successful effort, incorporating music for the first time into the Whatcom reads events. Local readers have shown high interest as well in the 2026 Whatcom Reads selection, *Solito: A Memoir*, by Javier Zamora.

March 2025 also gave us the first wave of City budget-related decisions, forecasting some lean budget years for the foreseeable future. We met in a special meeting to go over the Mayor's request for a budget reduction exercise and the Central Library renovation. We learned of the impacts of the elimination of federal Institute for Museum and Library Services funding on the Washington State Library. By June, that request had morphed into a request for 5% and 10% reduction exercises.

April 2025's Library Giving Day saw the highest amount donated on any Giving day yet—a great start to fundraising for the Central Library renovation.

We hosted a presentation from Christine Perkins, the Director of WCLS, who talked about their upcoming levy increase request and the impacts to services if it were to fail. Spoiler alert: It did not fail!!

BPL was awarded grants of \$2M and \$1,030,000 for the Central Library renovation from state and federal sources.

Library Board and staff and members of the Friends worked on getting library services and needs and day shelter needs into language included in the City's latest comp plan update. This will allow the comp plan to be referenced in any future planning and budgeting decisions by City officials. Thank you to the Friends for continuing to support the Library in this effort!

The efforts of our Fundraising committee, Rebecca Judd, and former trustee Rachel Myers brought about establishment of a process and set of forms for individuals who might be interested in making bequests to the library in their estate planning. We have since been notified of at least one new planned gift. In addition, individual direct donations to the Whatcom Community Foundation have been coming in from folks who want to support the renovation.

The City entered into a license agreement for additional space in Bellis Fair Mall for a short-term expansion during the Central Library renovation to provide additional collection space and storytime/programming space, perhaps providing space for some FOBPL activities as well.

Last month (February 2026) we received notification of an additional federal funds award, made possible by an earmark from Congressman Larsen, for \$850,000 for exterior improvements to the Central library. We are currently sorting out exactly what projects from our previous estimates we might prioritize with this new funding.

And finally, we learned that the Friends' Board increased its pledge of funds for the Central library renovations to \$325,000, a truly astounding number. The Friends have been amazingly generous in their support of this renovation project, along with supporting library programming, Whatcom Reads, additional speakers (Isabel Wilkerson), and other special projects. The BPL Board of Trustees truly appreciates your time and commitment to the improvement of the Bellingham Public Library. Thank you!

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

2025 was a great year for membership—we welcomed 54 new members! Currently, there are 322 active members; 73% are new or renewed since 2024 and 59% are new or renewed in 2025. This means that the actual number of current members sits somewhere between 191–235. We have begun reaching out to those members who have not renewed in a few years to encourage them to renew, and have already seen several return!

Of the 322 active members, 218 (68%) have expressed interest in volunteering. Volunteering supports the important work of this organization through the book sales, book pick-up, tabling, hospitality, and more!

Annual donations from membership contribute greatly to the work of the Bellingham Library—and we appreciate the generosity of all our members! Members donating at the \$5–\$20 range make up 70% of donations and 30% of members donate at the \$50–\$100 range. Thank you for your continued support!

The easiest way to renew your membership or join the Friends is online at [this link](#). Paper membership forms are available in the Nearly New area and at the cashier table of every sale. If you want to volunteer, you can indicate that when you join. When you volunteer for the Friends, you not only contribute to your community, you get to know a wonderful group of folks that become your friends!

### **In Memoriam:**

We were saddened to hear of the passing of one of our newer volunteers, Kevin Faulkner. Kevin had worked at our sales and was the son of a long-time volunteer, Constance Faulkner. We will miss having him as part of our volunteer team.

### **Retirement:**

We will have two board members retire this year, Brigid Wilson and Jane Brooks. Brigid has been our Membership Coordinator for three years and has done a great job of getting our membership rolls current as well as getting messages out to members about our sales and meetings. She is currently working with Ashtin Shepard to take over her role.

Jane Brooks has been our Publicity Coordinator for three years and has done a great job of getting the word out about our sales to the public. She has added several publicity sources such as Cascadia Daily News, the Chuckanut Reader and Pickford Cinemas. She will be training someone to take over her role.

We really appreciate all they have done to help us in our work to support the Bellingham Public Library!



## VOLUNTEER REPORT

The entire workforce of the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library is composed of volunteers. During 2025, the Friends had around 100 inquiries about volunteering. From that group, we were able to welcome 26 new volunteers.

Volunteers in the backroom process the books for sale (sorting, boxing, cleaning, computer look-up, pricing, etc.). In addition, folks handle magazines and free, Nearly New, and Display Case books. Books that do not meet our sale criteria are distributed by volunteers throughout the community via Little Libraries, the Food Bank, and other organizations. Volunteers covering these roles put in around 3,688 volunteer hours in 2025!

Throughout the course of the year, around 142 volunteers helped with the book sales (setting up, supervising, cashiering, restocking, and taking down). Together, they put in approximately 1,131 hours at the 2025 book sales.

In addition, volunteers help advertise the Friends by tabling at a number of public events, serving on the Friends board, and providing hospitality at events that support the library and its staff. All of this adds up to many volunteer hours per year!



**Friends of the  
Bellingham Public Library**

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH PARTNERS

Encouraging literacy is a part of the mission of the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library. For books that aren't a good fit for our fund-raising sales, we seek opportunities to get them into the hands of readers who might enjoy them. Our free books and magazines in the downstairs lobby of the Central branch are very popular. In addition, we work with library staff and community organizations to share books in other locations.

Our current projects include:

- Weekly drop-off of books to the Bellingham Food Bank for their clients. In 2025, approximately 200 boxes of books were delivered!
- In 2025 we distributed 3,563 children's books to the Kiwanis Club, Cordata Community Garden and Park Free Little Libraries, the Interfaith Council, Unity Care clinic, Lions Club, Skookum Kids, YWCA Shelter for Women and Young Children (Lakeway), the Chinese Meihua School, and Brigid Collins House.
- Children's books have also gone to Title 1 schools for book fair give-away events.

We are proud to be providing quality children's books that enhance literacy for so many young people and their families and are thrilled to be able to support so many efforts in our community.

## VILLAGE BOOKS PARTNERSHIP

We are very fortunate to have Village Books as a long-time partner of donations. When customers bring in their used books to Village Books, the books that VB can't use are set aside to donate. Three times weekly, Skip Johnsen, David Huss, and Jack Kimmes go pick up several boxes of these books and then drop them off at the library. The quality of these books ranges from very good to excellent and many of them get sold in our Nearly New sales area in the library. We really appreciate this community partnership!

## COMMUNITY SHOPPING DAY

The Friends are a 2026 Community Shopping Day Recipient!

In 2025, the Friends applied for a Community Shopping Day (CSD) grant being offered by the Community Food Co-op in Bellingham. We were thrilled to learn that our application was selected along with 11 other worthy non-profit recipients for the year 2026!

Our designated CSD will be Saturday, September 19, 2026. The Friends will receive 2% of the combined sales from both store locations on that day. In addition, the Co-op will highlight our organization's mission with in-store signage and inclusion in their email newsletter and on social media during the month of September.

The more people that shop on our CSD, the larger our donation will be, so please mark your calendars and share this news with your friends!

## WANDER BREWING PARTNERSHIP

Each year on the first Saturday in August, the Friends partner with Wander Brewing to host a pop-up book sale at the brewery (1807 Dean Ave, off Ohio St.) In 2025, attendance was strong and the sale yielded \$870.

This year the date is August 1<sup>st</sup> from noon to 5 pm—a fun event, outdoors, great books and great beer, lots of great people!



## RIDWELL DONATION

With the support of Miranda LeonJones of the library staff, we have also started a partnership with Ridwell, a company that does pickups of items to be recycled. With each pickup, Ridwell has a "featured category." This year they featured "books" in one month and then "children's books" in another. They dropped off huge containers of books at the library and we sorted through them. Most were in good enough condition to put in our sales. The ones we couldn't use went to our "free books" partners. We really appreciate this new partnership and look forward to working more with Ridwell.