

Local public libraries: Closed but not forgotten

By JENNIFER COSTLEY

The Public Library Association released a survey on April 1. The topic? "Public Libraries Respond to COVID-19." I'll confess, I was nervous when I opened the document. It's hard to know if what you are doing is right when it's never been done before. More than 2,500 libraries responded to the survey, and of those who did, 98 percent were closed to the public.

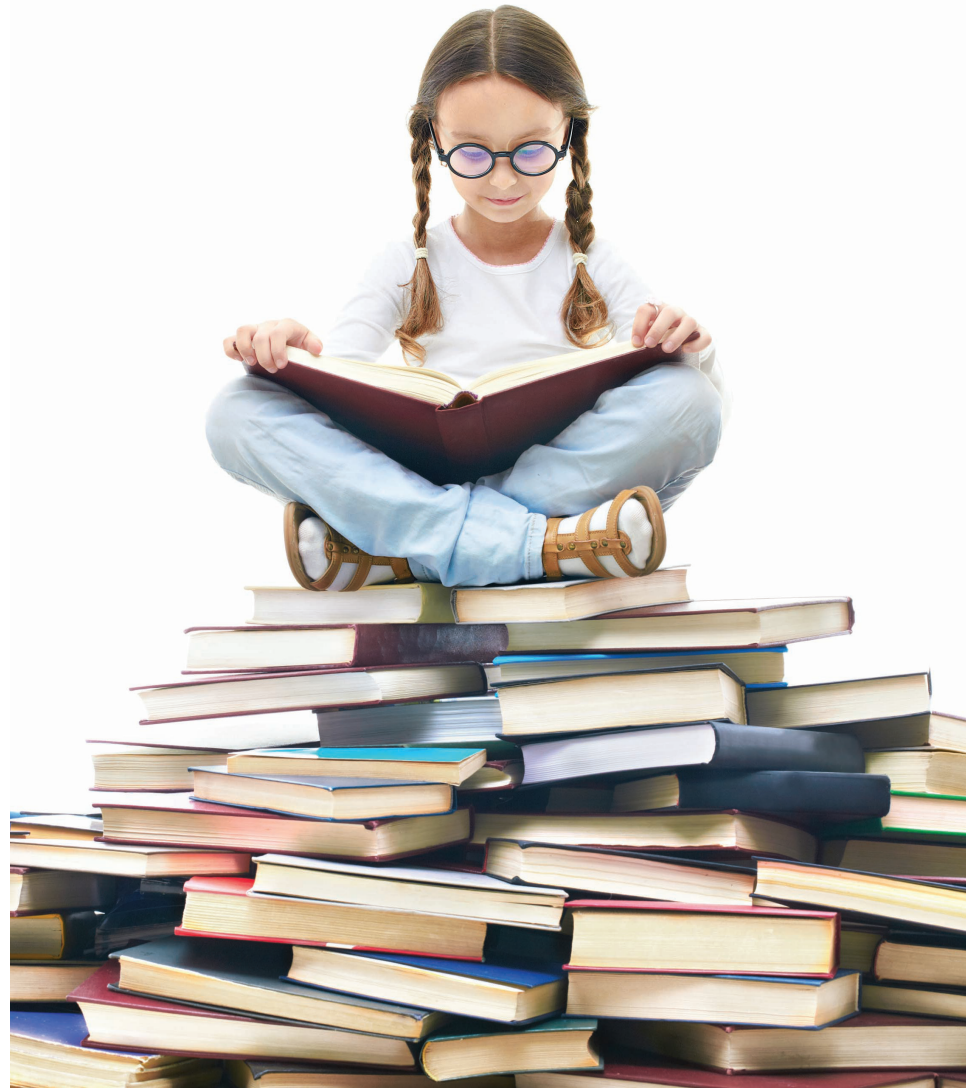
But closed to the public and non-operational are two different things. Of those closed libraries, many like Pendleton have transitioned to an alternate service model. Pendleton Public Library's new model has meant rolling out innovative ways to provide services patrons expect from us, as well as coming up with new ways to serve a community in crisis.

Here is what we are doing:

Curbside delivery: You may place a hold on any item in the Pendleton Public Library collection, as well as items from a select list of surrounding libraries (see our website at www.pendletonlibrary.com).

When your item or items are ready for pickup, a staff member will call, text, or email to inform you. When you arrive at the library to pick up your items, please pop your trunk and call the library. A staff member wearing a mask will deliver your items in a bag to the trunk of your car.

Mystery packs: We get it, it's hard to know what to pick when you can't browse the shelves. Let library staff select for you! If you visit our website, scroll to the bottom and select the "Request a Mystery Pack" button. You will be taken to a book menu where you can select the types of items you enjoy. When



your mystery pack is ready, library staff will call and arrange curbside pickup.

Virtual Story Time: Check out our Facebook page for virtual Story Times featuring favorite read-alouds. Ms. Jennifer and Ms. Briana love knowing you are watching, so drop a comment with your thoughts on the story or any requests for future story times.

Ebooks and audiobooks: Ebooks and audiobooks are free with the use of your library card. Just go to your app store and download the Libby app. Instructions for getting started are available on our website as well as Facebook.

over the phone. Be sure and have your Oregon driver's license handy.

At the time of the Public Library Association survey libraries didn't know if they would be closed for two weeks or indefinitely. Some libraries had tried curbside and quickly determined it was not a good fit for their staff. Most libraries were struggling to adjust to functioning as a virtual library while knowing all too well that a digital divide exists, preventing many patrons from accessing new services without the use of public computers.

The survey will serve as a snapshot of a difficult time in history for libraries. Closure is not what we do. Historically, libraries have been a place of refuge in times of unrest. When Hurricane Michael hit the Florida panhandle, one library served as a shelter, housing and feeding 150 people. During the 2018 California wildfires, libraries extended their hours to provide a space with clean air to those who didn't have anywhere else to go. And in 2014 when rioting in Ferguson, Missouri, prompted the city and schools to shut down, it was the public library that stepped up to create a pop-up school for 200 displaced children.

Our response in difficult times is to open our doors and offer assistance. COVID-19 has challenged us to double down on our efforts without the aid of our buildings, computers, or ability to convene as a staff. We are up to the challenge. Will you take advantage of it?

Virtual Crafternoons: Join Ms. Briana once a week for a craft you can do with items you have around the house. This quick tutorial will help give parents and caregivers something to do to keep your little ones' creative juices flowing.

No fines during pandemic closure: Are you worried about items you checked out before or during the closure? Don't be. We will not be charging any late fees during this time.

Get a library card over the phone: Meant to get a library card, but never had the time? All you have is time, now! Give us a call and we will fill out your application

Jennifer Costley is director of the Pendleton Public Library and mother of two. You can reach the library at 541-966-0380.