

Impact

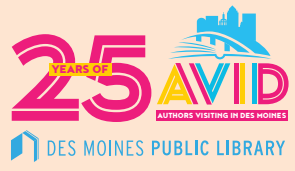
Spring 2026



Kaveh Akbar with young reader at Iowa Author Awards Dinner

**Foundation
provides record
\$296,880
in 2025**

**AViD turns 25,
Central Library
turns 20**



In This Issue:

Q&A with New DMPL Director 2
 How Your Support Has Helped 4
 Impact Spotlight: Melanie Jacobs
 of Catloaf Studio 5
 Make an Estate Gift 6
 Join Us for AViD's
 25th Anniversary 8

From the Executive Director



Congrats! In 2025, you helped the Foundation provide the Des Moines Public Library (DMPL) system with a record \$296,880. Your donations fueled DMPL programs that enriched the lives of more than 124,000 people of all ages, across the city. Thank you!

Public libraries are vital. They spark literacy, foster lifelong learning, and provide important social connections. But the city budget seems to tighten each year. Your continued support is critical.

In fact, DMPL requested more than \$483,000 from the Foundation this year. That is a nearly 65% increase over last year's record level of support. We can't meet this need without you. Please consider a gift now.

Thanks for loving the library.

Dave Remund, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Meet Melissa McCollum: Q&A with New DMPL Director



Selected after a nationwide search, Melissa McCollum began her role in February. She brings both extensive library experience and deep Des Moines roots to the role.

1. How did you fall in love with public libraries?

My earliest library experiences were at the former downtown Des Moines Public Library under the direction of Mrs. Estes, where I spent countless hours exploring the stacks on my own and choosing the books that I wanted to read. I always felt welcome and inspired there – a feeling I have dedicated my career to recreating for others.

2. What most excites you about taking on leadership of the Des Moines Public Library system?

I'm excited to work with our dynamic, dedicated, and innovative staff, Board of Trustees, Foundation, and partners to build on the library's legacy and continue to deepen its impact in our beloved community.

3. Why should people support public libraries? How can they best do so?

Public libraries enrich lives and strengthen communities in so many ways. They are community hubs connecting people with resources, services, and each other. They support vulnerable community members of all ages, serve as economic engines for personal and local economic development, and are a sound investment in quality of life for all.

Great options for supporting libraries include donating to the Des Moines Public Library Foundation, becoming a library volunteer, and reaching out to elected representatives to make sure they know the importance of public libraries, intellectual freedom, and safeguarding access to library buildings, collections, programs, and services in our community and beyond.

4. If you could share one message with DMPL donors and sponsors, what would that be?

Thank you! Our summer reading program, outreach, author programs, libraries, and community would not be the same without you.

5. What's a book that surprised or challenged you?

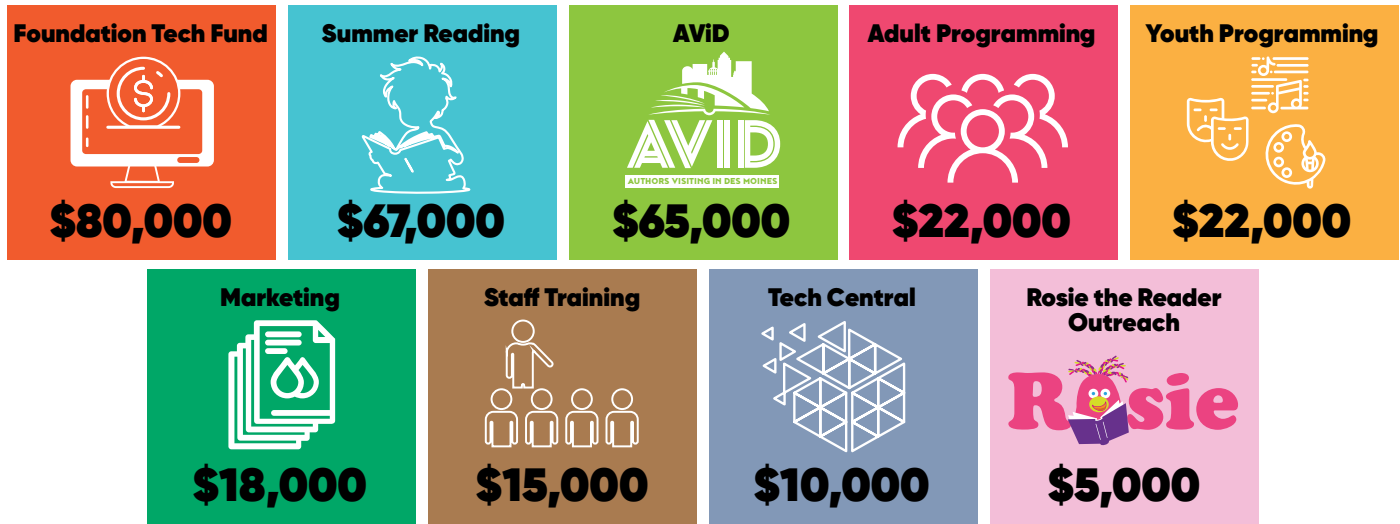
I return to Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Wherever You Go, There You Are* about once a year. It's a guide to mindfulness meditation. It's about engaging fully in the present moment, using breath as an anchor, developing emotional resilience, and the accessibility of these tools.

6. When you're not at the library, how do you spend your free time?

One of my favorite activities is watching my son Quinn play basketball. He plans to play at Grinnell College next year, so I'm now a Pioneers fan in addition to a Cyclones fan. I also enjoy reading, hiking, and exploring new places with family and friends.

Where Does the Money Go?

DMPL requests funds from the Foundation each year. For 2026, the Foundation board unanimously approved \$483,000 to support DMPL programs. Some of the approved requests include:



Introducing Our New Board Members



Kelly Edmister,
Community Leader

Public libraries contribute to community development wherever they are located. Providing libraries with financial and volunteer resources will be critical as libraries continue to be called upon to build and maintain communities.



Keren Fiorenza,
Drake University

Each library branch feels of its place, reflecting the neighborhood and community it serves. That connection makes the library, and books inside, feel personal and meaningful. I love seeing kids' bikes parked outside and knowing that the library has become part of their everyday lives.



Kate Hightshoe-Lambert,
*Kate Shu Collective and
The Monarch Shoppe LLC*

Having the opportunity to check out library books was a privilege, it was something my siblings and I looked forward to growing up—the bookmobile, the free McDonald's sundae or small French fry, the puppets and records you could check out. Some of my most precious and life-shaping memories are around books, reading, and the public library.



John Maly,
Sammons Group

The library is such a wonderful resource that I feel that everyone should support them, if by no other way than by visiting their local branch and utilizing the services they provide.

How Your Support Helped: July–December 2025

Adult Programming

Foundation support ensured adults across the Des Moines Public Library system had access to engaging, free programs during the second half of 2025. For example:



- At South Side Library, patrons enjoyed Reality Trivia Bonanza, book discussions, and watercolor classes.
- East Side Library offered live music, Cooking Around the World, Why Zoos Exist, and popular themed events including Haunted Iowa.
- North Side Library continued Community Craft Night, hosted a second Swedish Death Cleaning 101 due to demand, and offered The World of Teas.
- Forest Avenue Library provided a wide mix of creative, cultural, and wellness programs, including Craft Night, Chair Yoga, and Native American Stories & Lifestyles.

Children's & Teen Programming

From July through December 2025, Foundation support powered engaging, hands-on programs for youth across all branches, creating spaces for creativity, learning, and connection.

- South Side Library hosted activities like Pixel Art, Glow Jars, and teen trivia events.
- East Side Library offered Summer Reading programs, an Instrument Petting Zoo, and family events like Teddy Bear Campout, alongside cultural learning experiences.
- North Side Library featured programs such as Fairy Gardens, a Taylor Swift–themed celebration, and teen cooking classes.
- At Franklin Avenue Library, large-scale events drew strong participation, including Gingerbread House Workshops, a reptile program, and a teen after-hours Laser Tag & Nerf Party.
- Forest Avenue Library continued to offer arts, bilingual storytimes, and community-centered programs.



Funding from the Foundation also provided for shared resources across the system, like sensory tools, a Nintendo Switch, and multi-branch events.

Summer Reading



Nearly 10,000 children and teens stay engaged in learning over the summer, thanks to support from the Foundation. They logged more than 1 million minutes of reading, and each took home a book for their personal library. Programs remained a key part of the experience, with 223 children's programs (7,606 attendees) and 29 teen programs (475 attendees). Outreach extended the library's reach through visits to classrooms, summer care sites, and community events, engaging thousands of children where they are.

Teens also contributed through 746 volunteer hours, supporting younger readers and programs. The summer led to 639 new library cards issued, reflecting deeper community connection.

Thanks to the Foundation's investment, Summer Reading continues to be a powerful tool for literacy, equity, and community connection—ensuring that learning doesn't stop when school is out.

Iowa Author Awards Dinner Marks 25th Year



The 25th Annual Iowa Author Awards Dinner was held this past October at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, the beautifully restored former home of the downtown library. Former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack and First Lady Christie Vilsack served as hosts and honorary co-chairs. The event drew 192 guests.

Recognized were Kaveh Akbar, Vince Gotera, Kali White VanBaale, John Domini (posthumously), who reflect the diversity of literary talent tied to Iowa. Retired DMPL director Susan Amend Woody received the Friend of Literacy Award. In total, this event raised nearly \$40,000 to benefit library programs and initiatives across the city.

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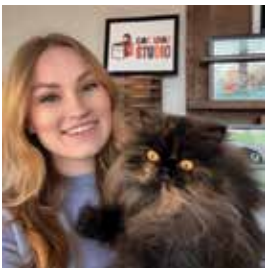
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Impact Spotlight: Melanie Jacobs of Catloaf Studio



After moving to Des Moines, Melanie Jacobs began pursuing art full-time. Through a fellow artist, she discovered Tech Central, the Des Moines Public Library's hands-on technology space. There, she gained access to professional-

grade tools—including button makers, sublimation printers, and other creative equipment—without needing to invest personal capital.

Tech Central allowed Melanie to experiment, fail safely, and refine her ideas. With support from knowledgeable library staff, she learned how to size designs correctly, troubleshoot equipment issues, and adapt her digital artwork into new formats. Library staff played a key role in helping her confidently use unfamiliar machines and resolve technical problems when they arose.

The Impact

Using library technology, Melanie expanded her product line to include low-cost, high-demand items such as buttons and magnets—affordable “impulse

buys” that significantly increased her sales at markets and conventions.

As a result:

- She now sells her work at local markets, regional festivals, and Comic Cons
- Her products are stocked in 18 retail stores across the U.S.
- She transitioned fully into self-employment as an artist
- Her brand visibility increased as wearable, shareable products spread organically

Crucially, Tech Central allowed Melanie to test products before investing, avoiding costly purchases of equipment she wasn't sure would sell in the marketplace.

Why Philanthropy Matters

Programs like Tech Central exist because of philanthropic support. Donor funding helps expand access to creative technology, maintain up-to-date equipment, and support innovation that directly fuels local economic growth. For Melanie, Tech Central wasn't just a workspace—it was a launchpad.

Lasting impact: The promise of an estate gift



If you love the library, that love can extend well beyond your lifetime. Estate gifts have recently helped upgrade lighting, replace furniture, and expand collections, among other needs.

The Estes-Spaulding Legacy Society recognizes and honors those who designate a gift to the Des Moines Public Library Foundation in their will or estate plan. This typically involves signing a simple pledge form (so we know of your intent) and including language in your will or trust documents. Knowing your intention helps us plan ahead and, if you wish, celebrate and recognize your future gift now. (We also have members who choose to remain anonymous.)

Named for trailblazing former library directors Elaine Graham Estes and the late Forrest Spaulding, this special group of donors will open doors well past their lifetimes. For more information, contact our executive director, Dave Remund, via phone (515-412-0180) or email (daveremund@dmpfoundation.org).

Thank You to Our Donors

The following donations were received by the Des Moines Public Library Foundation from July 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact us, and we will make corrections.

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