



## Fine Free Opens Up A World of Possibilities

Start a new chapter with us!

As of September 1, the Library will no longer charge overdue fines on books and other media. That means if you mistakenly take an extra day or two to finish your book or movie, you won't get a daily late charge. Or if you stopped using the Library because you had an overdue balance, we've wiped it clean and want to see you come back!

"It's a fresh start. We don't want fines to be an obstacle to all of the valuable resources available at the Library," says Rebecca Verhayden, Assistant Director for Planning and Communication at the Library. "We have so much to offer. Books, of course, but there's so much more: online newspapers; board games; museum passes; programs for all ages; and rooms to reserve, to name a few."

The Library's decision to go fine free follows a nationwide trend to provide free and equitable access to library materials and programs so everyone has the opportunity



to learn and be successful. It also is consistent with CPH Library's mission to "foster community connections by providing the space and resources for patrons to be

educated, enriched, and entertained," Verhayden says.

Materials can still be renewed, but must be returned by their due date. Any lost or damaged materials will incur fees. Museum passes, WiFi hotspots, and room checkouts will continue to accrue overdue fines for delinquent returns. You can find more detailed information on our website.

"The decision to go fine free comes after much deliberation and careful fiscal attention," says Alex Gutelius, Library Director. Overdue fines account for less than 0.5% of the library's operating budget and have been steadily decreasing. "Many area libraries are already fine free, and together with the Board of Trustees, we felt it was prudent to prevent any barriers in making our Library accessible to all people."

## Planning for the Future

My love of reading comes from going to the library all the time as a child in the Capital District. Mom took us to the library for story times and Dad to the Schenectady Library on Sundays. My parents also read with my brother and I every day.



I was a reluctant independent reader until my parents introduced me to the American Girl Doll books. To encourage (bribe) me to read on my own, they promised me an American Girl Doll if I finished the entire series. I ended up with a Samantha doll, a passion for reading and a love of reading challenges.

I studied English at St. Bonaventure University, studied abroad at Oxford University, then got my Masters of Library Science at the University at Albany. I went to library school because I didn't want to be a teacher or work with children, but I fell in love with being a children's librarian and was in that role for the next 12 years. I am proof that there is the perfect book for any child—and that can spark a love of reading.

I became Assistant Director for Planning and Communication at CPH Library earlier this year and am excited to lead the Strategic Plan process to help shape the future of CPH Library. This involves assessing how we're serving the community and finding ways to improve services, collections, and resources. It includes small changes, such as which board games we should circulate (I get to select those), to big changes, such as planning for future construction projects and going fine free.

Summer Reading is still my favorite time of year at the Library. I also have a "books to read" scratch off poster in my office—but these days I prefer mysteries and nonfiction.

# New Sensory Room is for Everyone!

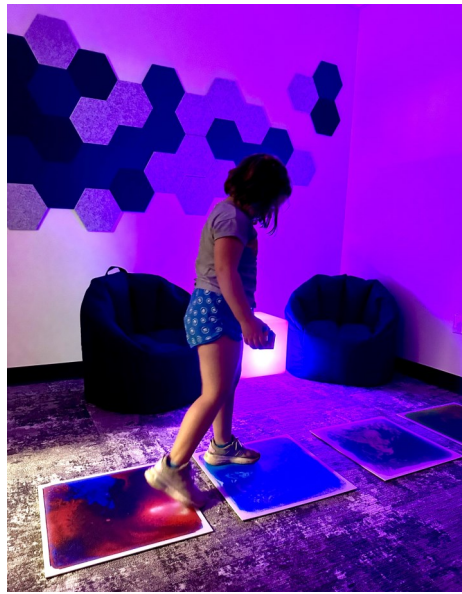
What do the Buffalo Bills and CPH Library have in common?

No, not games, but a Sensory Room for visitors who may feel overwhelmed or stressed.

“A sensory room is a calming, stress-free environment for people of all ages and abilities who feel overwhelmed or need to decompress,” says Barbara Reese, who proposed and spearheaded the project for the Library. Reese, a CPH librarian assistant with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a masters in reading, has a strong background and interest in special education.

“Sensory rooms were originally developed for people who are neurodivergent, but over time they have been found to benefit people with ADHD, PTSD, anxiety, or mood disorders. Providing a sensory room is part of the Library’s mission to be accessible to all and is an expansion of our services—it’s a space for everyone.”

The room, located on the first floor near the computers, promotes a relaxing environment and offers comfortable seating and soft lighting. It includes a variety of experiences that make it possible for users to use their sense of touch and sight to help focus their minds and identify and calm their feelings.



Examples include:

- A wall labyrinth, tactile wall panels, and a variety of fidget toys to help keep the mind calmly active and more easily able to focus on tasks or communication.
- Squeezie seats, bean bag chairs, weighted books, and lap pads to provide a sense of enveloping and comfort.
- A visual timer that provides visual clues and auditory alerts for time management and transitions.
- Other activities are available to help identify and regulate feelings.

The Sensory Room, which opened in July with an official ribbon cutting on August 28, was generously funded by the Friends of the Library and a grant from the Southern Adirondack Library System.

Library card holders who are 18 and older can reserve the room in advance on our website or you can also see if the room is available

when you visit the Library—just check at the Ask Desk.

“We’ve gotten a lot of positive feedback from the community,” Reese says. “Folks who are coming in and using the room are very excited to learn about it and have been very complimentary about the items in it and what a great resource it is.”

Kimberly Nemeth, a technology librarian, brought her young nieces to the Sensory Room recently.

“I’ve never seen my 6-year-old niece so calm and focused,” she said. “It was an amazing experience and she can’t wait to come back.”

## SENSORY KITS

The Library also recently created Sensory Kits that include noise reduction earmuffs, sunglasses, and several fidget toys to help users feel more comfortable in the Library or when participating in a program. These specialized kits are available on the second floor for in-library use; you don’t need to check them out.

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