



**SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OF NEW JERSEY**  
 One Vogt Drive, P.O. Box 6700, Bridgewater, NJ 08807  
 T: 908.458.8400 F: 908.707.8324  
 Visit SCLSNJ.org

## **SCLSNJ Strategic Plan Update: October through December 2021**

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Here are the initiatives worked on over the last several months that specifically support our strategic priorities.**

#### **Promoting the Library as an impartial platform for creating MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS AND CONNECTIONS**

SCLSNJ continued its rich partnership with the Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County (LVSC) by publicizing the process of how to become a Literacy Tutor within the community. Literacy skills are essential in this constantly changing world, yet many adults in our community struggle to read, write and communicate in English. Tutor Information Sessions are held monthly on Zoom and SCLSNJ is happy to promote these events on behalf of LVSC.

#### **Exploring new ways to SHAPE OUR SPACES to meet community needs**

The New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act (NJLCBA) authorized \$125 million in state bonds to fund critical improvements to New Jersey public libraries in 2017. The bond issuance was approved by New Jersey voters and all applicants were required to identify a 50% percent match to fund their proposed projects from the local municipality. This three-year long grant project across two funding cycles officially ended. In 2021, the Borough of Boundbrook was awarded \$256,000 in funding working with Millenium Strategies and Cornerstone Architectural Group. The scope of work in 2022 will focus on a partial roof replacement, gutter linings, parapet flashings, cupola and fenestration repair, as well as interior plaster and painting work.

#### **WELCOMING new residents**

SCLSNJ partnered with Somerset County on a special initiative to help residents understand and apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The project goal is to equitably increase community awareness of and application to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ERAP effort. The project addressed strategies in overcoming transportation, technology, and trust barriers faced by ERAP-eligible residents. Library promotion, hiring and training of temporary field staff, and collaboration with established community partners in hard to reach communities helped Somerset County connect with ERAP-eligible residents who may be difficult to locate, contact, and persuade to apply. The field-work element combined with the trusted voices within a community partner approach, draws from the US Census Bureau's methods of connecting with hard to count communities. Hard to count communities are defined as communities with historically low response rates to census surveys. Using monies from federal funding, Somerset County hired four to six ERAP Educators. ERAP Educators are temporary hires dedicated to gaining expert knowledge and skills in promoting awareness of ERAP, facilitating eligible resident completion of ERAP applications, and training community partners in the basics of ERAP to bolster awareness in hard to reach communities. ERAP Educators participated in researching and identifying hard to reach communities. At least 50% of ERAP Educators are bilingual in English-Spanish.



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### **Addressing the needs of SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS**

The Brook Brook branch began a pilot program which taught non-literate Spanish-speaking adults to read and write in Spanish. Research shows that literacy in one's native or first language is beneficial in attaining a second language. To address the literacy needs of pre-literate adults in the Bound Brook community, the pilot program is going to use a full time staff member who will be dedicated to providing Spanish learners assistance in navigating a tool called Leamos. Leamos is designed for the express purpose of teaching native Spanish speakers how to read and write in Spanish. The pilot program will be partnering with the following community partner organizations to help promote and share the specifics of the pilot program:

- Casa de Esperanza
- Building Bridges to Better Health in Bound Brook & South Bound Brook
- Churches in the region with Spanish speaking congregations
- Middle Earth
- Literacy Volunteers of Somerset County (LVSC)
- Borough of Bound Brook and Schools
- Borough of South Bound Brook



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### CORE SERVICES:

Core service activities are a part of normal SCLSNJ business. Here are a few recent highlights and examples.

#### Making PERSONALIZED CONNECTIONS between patrons and materials

The State Library purchased a little over 1,000 e-books accessible through Baker & Taylor's Axis 360 platform. The state collection is available to every public library in NJ. The limitations are: patrons can only place holds on five titles at a time and only check out three items at a time. The loan period is set at 14 days. SCLSNJ added the state e-book collection to our database page: [New Jersey State Library Axis 360 Digital Media Library](#). This is a free service, and SCLSNJ wants patrons to have access to it for personalized materials connections.

#### Presenting programs that help community members CONNECT, EXPLORE, SHARE AND DISCOVER

Notable programs throughout the fourth quarter of 2021 included:

##### A Nutritional Approach to Managing Your Blood Sugar

Nutrition can have a huge impact with managing diabetes. Licensed Registered Dietician Amanda Fano discussed the importance of balancing your plate while incorporating other lifestyle factors. She explained which foods may cause blood sugars to increase, and which foods can help lower and maintain consistent blood sugar levels.

##### Winter Adaptations

The Somerset County Park Commission presented a special program that explored how wildlife survives the long winter. The concepts of habitat, niche, and adaptation was covered in an interactive discussion, using animal 'artifacts' to further illustrate these strategies.

#### Serving as a community GATHERING SPACE

Patrons were able to connect with colorful works of art in the Art Space at the Warren branch in late 2021. The eclectic 20-piece exhibit features watercolor paintings, pastels, and ink creations by New Jersey artist Kathleen Maguire. Maguire, who retired from the corporate world in 2015 after 45 years, states that she is enjoying a "new beginning" by devoting her time to art. Her collection, "The End is the Beginning," was available for the public to observe during regular hours of operation through the end of January 2022.

#### Promoting and supporting LIFELONG LEARNING

County Library Administrator Brian Auger was a featured speaker at the Somerset County Governing Officials' Association meeting and delivered a successful, entertaining and informative talk about SCLSNJ and the services it provides. The audience was made up of elected and appointed officials from towns both inside and outside the library service area.



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### **Providing TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND EXPERTISE that meet the needs of the community**

Through Communico Reserve patrons can now reserve meeting rooms online. The meeting room reservation page is located on SCLSNJ.org under Using our Libraries, and then Meeting Rooms.

#### **Room Procedures - Overview**

- Patrons must agree to the [Meeting Room Policy](#) before being able to book a room.
- Patrons can reserve a room up to 95 days in advance.
- In the event that a room needs to be reserved more than 95 days in advance, staff should consult with their branch manager.
- A SCLSNJ library card number and pin are required to reserve a room.
- There is a 15-minute buffer at the start and end of the day.

### **Creating opportunities that build Somerset County's ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Held every December, SCLSNJ staff attended the Annual Meeting Awards at the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP). SCBP brings together key players in the Somerset County business community for Somerset County's largest business event where our community's economic success is celebrated and attendees can learn about the Business Partnership's objectives for the coming year. Additionally, SCBP recognizes the outstanding companies that demonstrate how Somerset County remains the best place to live, work, and play. SCLSNJ works with this partner organization across the calendar year on a variety of programs and educational events for the public.