



# Library Director's Report

**April 28, 2026 Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees**

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## **LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

- We have been awarded an electric-assist Technology Book Bike via a federally-funded EmPOWERing Access California State Library Project. The book bike will serve as a “library on wheels” to bring library resources and community connections to residents where they are (e.g. “pop up” or story time at schools, parks, community events, and underserved neighborhoods). The “electric assist” book bike feature will allow library staff the ability to issue library cards or check out materials on-site through on-board Wi-Fi hotspots for digital access. The staff report and resolution are scheduled for the May 13, 2026, City Council meeting.
- In a pre-celebration of National Volunteer Week, April 19–25, 2026, we held a Volunteer Appreciation Brunch on Thursday, April 16, featuring a “bagel bar,” opportunity drawing, games, and thank-you gifts for our volunteers. This week overlaps with National Library Week, which makes it all the more special. Our staff-run “photo booth” captured our engaged volunteers, individually and in groups, such as Trivia Challenge Volunteers. 50 volunteers plus staff filled the community room. We are planning to celebrate our children and teen volunteers towards the end of our busy Summer Learning Challenge programs and activities.
- On Monday, April 20th, the LPR reserves room in the first-floor lobby began opening at 9am Monday - Friday. Previously, the opening coincided with Library hours. This will allow our patrons to pick up holds earlier, especially on Thursday mornings when the Library opens at 12 noon. Parking is usually very available at 9am; this will give patrons another timeslot to quickly park and pick up reserves.
- The Library’s website now has a detailed Parking & Directions page: <https://www.ssfca.gov/Departments/Library/Parking-Directions>
- Mark your calendars:
  - Wednesday, April 29, 2026, 5:00pm, LPR City Council Chambers: Encore screening of *Hamilton: An American Musical*

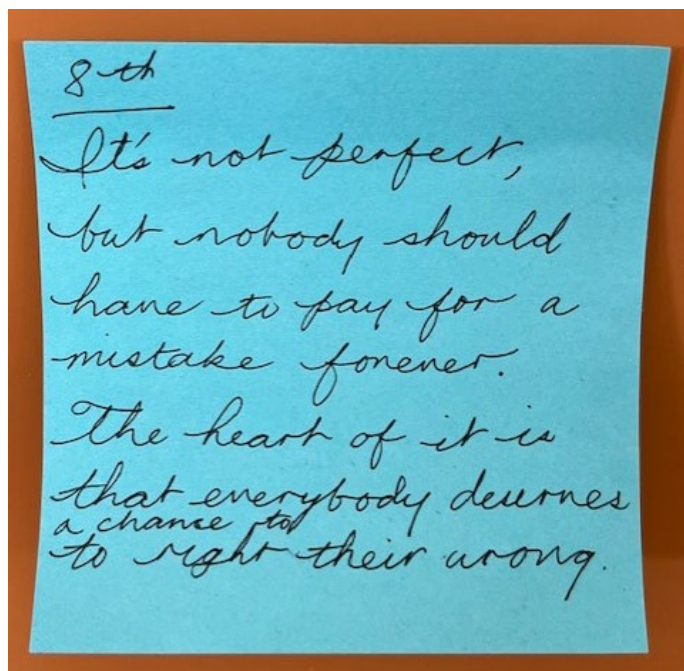
- American Revolution Experience Exhibit is scheduled for April 24, 2026 – April 30, 2026
- Free Comic Book Day: Saturday, May 2, 2026
- One Book One Coast Event: Author Talk, Sunday, May 31, 2:00pm: George Takei on *They Called Us Enemy*; Live Zoom program in LPR City Council Chambers or remote viewing from home (QR code on flyer)

## America250 Programming

The Library celebrates America250 all year long with programming on history and culture. In March, we focused programming on American history in celebration of Women’s History Month. In May, Library programming will feature stories of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

*Do you know your Bill of Rights? A drop-in community civics activity at Grand Avenue Library*

As part of our effort to inform the public about civic life and as part of our celebration of America's founding 250 years ago, the Grand Avenue Branch Library staff created an interactive board with details about the Bill of Rights and Reconstruction constitutional amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th amendments that came about after the Union defeated the Confederacy). Participants were asked to identify which of these amendments was of most value to them personally and say why. Responses were diverse and personal, with many people emphasizing the post-civil war amendments.



## *Women’s History Month programming*

The Library celebrated Women’s History Month and America250 with screenings of two films examining important women of American history, *The Inquisitor* and *The Hello Girls*.

*The Inquisitor* tells the story of civil rights icon Barbara Jordan. Jordan was a groundbreaking Texas congresswoman whose sharp intellect and moral clarity transformed

U.S. politics. From Nixon's impeachment to civil rights battles, her voice demanded accountability.

Councilmember Flor Nicolas introduced the film and shared her story of becoming a woman in government, specifically the first female Filipino mayor.

Many attendees were moved by the film and left with tears in their eyes. One attendee said, "I remember listening to Barbara Jordan on the television during the Watergate Trials. As a kid, her voice was so strong and believable. Hearing her brought back so many memories."

*The Hello Girls* tells the story of the more than 200 women who served as front-line switchboard operators during World War I. The Library's event included a screening of the film and a discussion of local history ties with special guest speaker Monica J. Williams, Director of Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

#### *Letters to Strong Women community writing project*

At the Grand Avenue Library, postcards and pens were supplied for patrons in the Teen Zone to write letters to strong women. We highlighted iconic American Women in book displays for inspiration on who to write to, connecting the history month with America 250 initiatives.

#### **Homework Help Launches at the Library, a collaboration with the Youth Commission**

In March, the Homework Help program, spearheaded by Commissioner Yunn Lee, debuted at the Library. Each Wednesday from 3:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M. a group of volunteer student tutors from the local high schools assist K-12 students with their homework. Quiet study areas, snacks, and laptops are also available for participants. Additionally, library staff provide reference support. For example, a staff member may assist a student with finding books and navigating homework and research databases. Homework Help will run until the end of May 2026 and then continue again in the Fall.

#### **Out-of-school STEM Education**

Brain Explorations is a recurring series of workshops, led by Youth Commissioners Sania Gulati and Ysebella Tolentina, that teach children brain science through presentations and related activities. The current series runs from March to May on select Saturdays, and includes topics such as the nervous system, spinal cords, and neurons.

#### **Measure K community socials**

Through a Measure K grant, Supervisor Jackie Speier and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors provided the libraries of Peninsula Library System with the means to hold new programs and events. The libraries have put together a series of non-traditional events this

year to foster community and connection, a chance to experience fun, learning, and culture together.

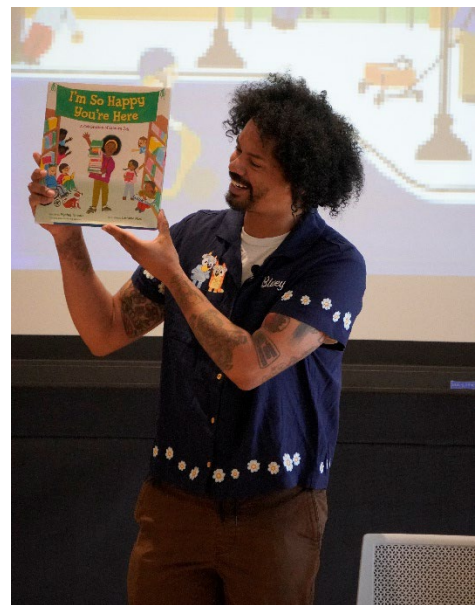
### *Game Nights at Grand Ave. Library*

As part of the library's goal to provide opportunities for adults to socialize and meet people, the Grand Avenue Library is hosting bi-monthly board gaming events funded in part with Measure K funds. This month we emphasized the party game "Wavelength" which is apparently a Tik Tok trend! The game is a fun, social, cooperative guessing game. Participants had so much fun the first time that they requested playing it again during the next iteration of the program!

### *Mychal Threats of Reading Rainbow visits SSFPL*

On Saturday, March 28, the South San Francisco Public Library welcomed nearly 200 community members for a special, all ages event featuring Mychal Threats, Resident Librarian for *PBS* and *PBS Kids* and the host of the new *Reading Rainbow*.

The program opened with a family-friendly storytime led by Mychal, who read from his new picture book, *I'm So Happy You're Here: A Celebration of Library Joy*. A nationally known literacy and mental health advocate, Mychal then shared his personal journey with mental health, wellbeing, and self-care, followed by a Q&A with attendees.



During the second hour, community members had the opportunity to meet Mychal one on



one at a meet and greet that included book signings and photos. Concurrently, library staff hosted themed, all ages craft activities and created a welcoming space for community members to socialize and connect with fellow South San Franciscans. Staff also held a special drawing for free signed copies of Mychal's book, made possible through the generosity of the Friends of the South San Francisco Public Library.

## Celtic Knots workshop for St. Patrick's Day

Patrons of all ages gathered at the Library to learn how to tie Celtic knots in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. We offered leather, waxed polyester, paracord, licorice. Some patrons were very successful at making knots and helped others. This made for a great community building exercise. Patrons also complemented the accessibility of the program with Celtic knot books, 3D Celtic knot models, a continuous Celtic knot tying video, step-by-step instructions with pictures, Celtic knot tying handouts with various knots - easy to difficult- and Celtic knot coloring sheets. Patrons verbalized their appreciation for this "interesting, challenging, and fun craft."



## Transgender Day of Visibility



To celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility and the first day of National Poetry Month, the Library invited poets Jing Moskowitz and Jade Zora Dean to read poetry about their experience as trans women. The event was an insightful example of representation and allyship. During the Q&A, an audience member thanked the poets for "being true" to themselves. And another audience member, who identified as gender-nonconforming, shared they were grateful to have a space where "trans realities" could be centered.

## Asian American & Pacific Islander History Month

*South San Francisco Public Library Joins One Book, One Coast, the West Coast's Largest Book Club Connecting Communities Across Three States*

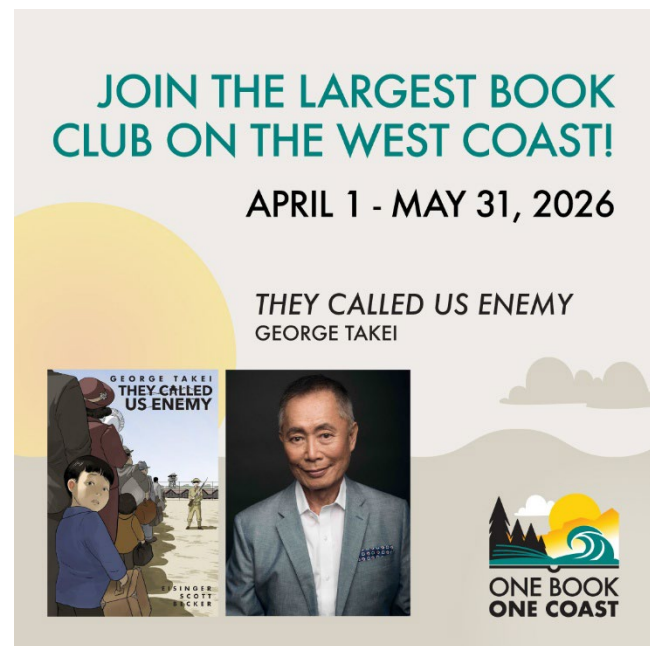
This spring, the Library invites the community to take part in *One Book, One Coast*, a shared reading initiative connecting more than 130 library systems across California, Oregon, and Washington, featuring *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei, Steven Scott, and Justin Eisinger and illustrated by Harmony Becker.

As the largest book club on the West Coast, the *One Book, One Coast* program brings readers together around one book to create opportunities for conversation, reflection, and meaningful connection across neighborhoods, cities, and state lines.

Physical copies of the book will be available to borrow as early as March 1, and unlimited digital copies of the eBook will be available from April 1 through June 6 on the Libby app by Overdrive and the Hoopla app.

### *Author Talk with George Takei*

To close the program, George Takei will appear virtually for a special author talk and book signing on Sunday, May 31 at 2:00 p.m. at the Library. The event, hosted at East Los Angeles Public Library, will be livestreamed on YouTube, allowing readers across the West Coast to participate together. Visit South San Francisco's Library | Parks & Recreation Center, on Sunday May 31 at 2:00 p.m. to watch the livestream in the City Council Chambers or register to watch from home by visiting the library's website.



## Literacy Skills programming, helping people to read and write

### *National Poetry Month*

To mark the 30th anniversary of National Poetry Month, the South San Francisco Public Library hosted a poetry reading with Andrew Paul Nelson and Carlos Quinteros III. They shared their own poems and some favorites from other Bay Area poets. Afterward, we had

a Q&A with the poets. We also handed out pocket-sized poems by Langston Hughes, Chen Chen, Lucille Clifton, Mary Oliver, and local favorite Kenneth Rexroth. One patron, Sherri, said that the "currency of poetry is joy," which perfectly summed up our cozy gathering.

#### *Writing Club at Grand Avenue Library*

Patrons explored the process of letter writing, journaling, and graphic novel character design. The program focused on creative expression, fine motor skills, communication, and literacy development. We tied in both Women's History Month and America 250 initiatives by highlighting American female authors, graphic novelists, and fictional diary series like Dear America for displays and signs.

#### *Club de Lectura at Grand Avenue Library*

The Grand Avenue Library's Club de Lectura is a volunteer-driven community program in which participants read a Spanish language book monthly and meet in the library on one evening to share their thoughts about the book. The program is held entirely in Spanish, and the books are selected by the group in tandem with library staff. The Library purchases copies of the books for participants to keep and markets the program on the library's calendars, newsletters and social media. This month the group read the book *El Invencible Verano de Lilliana* by Cristina Rivera Garza. The book is the Pulitzer Prize winning story of the murder of Rivera Garza's sister by her partner and is also an examination of violence against women in Mexico. The book was very well received by the book group, and the program was well-attended. In fact, we ran out of copies to give away and even the two borrowable library copies we put on display were checked out by community members interested in the title. The book group is currently identifying titles for the summer and fall months and will continue monthly through 2026.

#### *French Conversation Club*

The French Conversation Club has 16 active participants, with an average attendance of seven or eight for the weekly meeting. They're planning on meeting outside of the group to work on their French.

#### *Family Literacy Services*

In March, the Library hosted several Project Read Family Literacy Services programs:

- This year's first session of the My First Years, an early literacy storytime and activities program, launched March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

- Learning Wheels completed several special visits throughout the month, including Siebecker and Westborough Preschool in celebration of *Read Across America Week*.
- Our team also led two STEAM lessons at Ponderosa Elementary and the Homework Club at the Gene Mullin Community Learning Center during their early release week.
- Project Read Adult Literacy participants and their families participated in a “Book to Movie” event, where attendees read a book-to-film adaptation, created a themed craft, and enjoyed watching the movie together. The program was opened up to the community at large.
- The Spring 2026 Adult Programming sessions concluded in March. Through 10 weeks of programming, 48 patrons were recognized for having 75% attendance or more in a workshop with a total of 296.75 participant hours.

### *Project Read Book Club*

In February, Project Read’s Book Club relaunched its reading season with *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse. The group’s discussion was enriched by a tutor who shared cultural context that deepened participants’ understanding of the novel’s themes and message. The conversation was so engaging that members requested an additional meeting in early March to continue exploring the text.

The experience extended beyond discussion, as participants were inspired to further connect with the book’s themes in real life. Members independently organized a visit to a Hindu temple in Sunnyvale, where they gained firsthand insight into Hindu culture and traditions, including the practice of vegetarianism rooted in non-harming.

In March, Project Read’s Book Club participants established a new structure for future sessions: meeting twice per book to allow for deeper discussion. This month, the group read *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei, the selected title for the *One Book, One Coast* book club, and gathered for two thoughtful discussions exploring themes of identity, injustice, and resilience.

At the second meeting, participants viewed George Takei’s TED Talk and engaged in research on local history. They discovered the Tanforan Assembly Center Memorial, a site connected to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Inspired by this connection, members independently organized a visit following their discussion to deepen their understanding through place-based learning.

### **Legal Assistance from API Legal Outreach**



Several patrons have said that they're glad to have this service available. API Legal Outreach, our partner for this event, has seen so much interest on their registration form that they've had to add a note regarding how long it may take to receive a response. Outside of the program itself, library staff have helped patrons scan documents to send to API Legal Outreach in preparation for their appointments.

### **Earth Day / Crafts**

Patrons gathered at the Library to make Clay Animals for Earth Day. Over 100 people showed up to learn about endangered animals, share animal facts, and make their own clay animals complete with a diorama. Patrons connected with one another through new knowledge and skills building. Most everyone requested a repeat of the program.



*Patrons enjoy crafts after the Saturday storytime at Grand Avenue Library in March. We used the Air Toobz and yellow tissue paper squares to*

*pretend to catch fireflies. Then we used glue and tissue paper squares to cover jars with a battery powered candle inside as a night light.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Valerie Sommer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Valerie Sommer  
Library Director