



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Connecting Communities with Quilts
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Program Overview

Quilts tell stories, bring people together, and are symbols of resilience. Henrico County Public Library leveraged these qualities to create “Connecting Communities with Quilts,” an innovative initiative that increased patron visits to libraries and strengthened the community. The program can easily serve as a model for other localities.

“Connecting Communities with Quilts” wove twelve thematically linked programs throughout the library system in July and August of 2023. The initiative also capitalized on the library system’s popular summer reading program and the 2023 theme “All Together Now.” This strategy allowed Henrico County Public Library to engage and connect with adult community members in inventive ways.

The program included a large-scale community art project across six locations, a two-part workshop by Kuumba Afrikan American Quilting Guild, a lecture by Denise Lowe Walters of the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, a screening of a Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) documentary, and other resources, including tips on visiting barn quilt trails throughout rural Virginia.

With “Connecting Communities with Quilts,” Henrico County Public Library had the opportunity to attract new users and engage current users on a deeper level. The program resulted in increased July/August year-over-year patron visits to the library system-wide, a greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, and a raised awareness of free library resources available to the community.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The Henrico County population is increasingly diverse. There are many new residents, and more than 100 languages are spoken. The county is intentionally engaged in community-building and Henrico County Public Library plays a lead role in these efforts. Programming transcending

languages and cultures allows the library to combine public spaces, reading, and interests to make all feel valued.

“Connecting Communities with Quilts” took advantage of this opportunity to build a successful program. Quilting is the perfect metaphor: it is a tradition that exists in many cultures; quilts often tell stories, giving voice to diverse perspectives throughout the ages; and the act of quilting draws people together.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

“Connecting Communities with Quilts” expanded and amplified the library’s work to create space for conversations about diversity and to welcome all people. Innovative programs supported the summer reading theme, connected community members engagingly, and provided books and projects around quilting and its vast historical and cultural representations. Participants explored the significance of quilting, including African American and Native American perspectives. Components of the initiative were carried out in multiple locations, and it offers a model that can easily be scaled up or down, depending on available resources.

How Program Was Carried Out

“Connecting Communities with Quilts” was a system-wide programming effort that started in advance of the 2023 Summer Reading Program. Multiple quilt-based programs were scheduled to support and give concrete examples of the related Summer Reading Program “All Together Now” theme.

Historically geared towards children and families, planning and theme initiatives for the Summer Reading Program are established a year in advance. While supporting the learning in children and teen audiences is essential during the summer months, engaging adults during summer reading as well.

Working within the system-wide programming team and with a Summer Reading Committee, the tie-in theme “Connecting Communities with Quilts” was developed. Henrico County Public Library started by leveraging strong existing relationships with the maker community already using its spaces. The focus of the programming honored the practice of quilt-making while capitalizing on its innately collaborative nature to reach new audiences.

Program promotions began four months in advance through the library website, and one month in advance with the printed Program Guide and printable fliers. Supplies were purchased, packed, and distributed for local use two to four weeks in advance of the first “Connecting Communities with Quilts” program. The Adult Services System-wide Librarian visited each participating library to train staff in advance of the kick-off.

Promotional development for summer reading is multifaceted in order to maintain high levels of engagement. Henrico County Public Library designed flyers for overarching summer reading programs and supporting programming; encouraged participants to develop goals using paper logs or online via Beanstack; created online calendar entries to build up to summer reading kickoff programming, weekly prizes, signup incentives; and offered local programming and engagement opportunities at the library to keep up with reading and activities all summer long. Through these efforts, each “Connecting Communities with Quilts” program component received support through promotional flyers, social media posts, blog entries, and online calendar entries.

Highlights of the programming included:

- **Collaborative Community Paper Quilt:** The community was invited to create a paper quilt. Six libraries received kits consisting of 5” X 5” paper quilt blocks, craft supplies, and instructional handouts. The drop-in program invited all visitors to create paper quilt blocks. The resulting “quilts” were assembled and displayed in their respective six library locations for one month. Mirroring the quilt-making process, many people worked individually to create a single unit. The result proved people of all ages and backgrounds can share their

gifts to create one beautiful, functional whole. As the community quilts began to grow in Henrico Libraries, they were photographed and the progress was posted on social media outlets including Facebook and Instagram. This served to update participants and encourage others to join in the fun.

- **Kuumba Afrikan American Quilting Guild:** The Adult Services Programming Librarian partnered with the local Kuumba Afrikan American Quilting Guild to arrange a two-part instructional workshop and display of textile work. The workshops were titled “Quilting All Together Now,” tying together the 2023 summer reading theme and the “Connecting Communities with Quilts” program.
- **Story Quilts with Denise Lowe Walters from the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia:** Denise Lowe Walters, quilt artist and member of the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, spoke about and displayed her work at the library.
- **Quilt Trails of Virginia:** The Adult System-wide Programming Librarian developed a lecture-style program to spotlight numerous barn quilt trails across rural Virginia. Maps and photos of the trails were included, as well as visitation tips.
- **Screening of a Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) documentary *Craft in America: Quilts***

Financing and Staffing

Financing was minimal and leveraged many of Henrico County Public Library’s existing assets. Costs included:

Collaborative Community Paper Quilt: Costs included craft supplies for six locations (\$816.03), plus in-house printing for handouts on the history of traditional quilt block patterns. In-house staff planning and execution had no additional cost.

Kuumba Afrikan Quilting Guild: the guild generously provided instruction free of charge during the two workshops as a part of their community service. Henrico provided in-house sewing machines and sewing supplies, including fabric, thread, batting, etc. at a cost of \$227.83.

Story Quilts with Denise Lowe Walters from the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia: The lecture and exhibition incurred \$600.00 in speakers' fees.

Quilt Trails of Virginia: Was a staff-developed original lecture program. All associated costs were in-house based on staff planning and execution.

Craft in America, Quilts Screening: This was free of charge; PBS granted screening rights.

Program Results

Collaborative Community Paper Quilt: More than 350 library users expressed themselves by creating and displaying 5" x 5" paper quilt blocks. The community quilt project captured the attention of library users of all ages in the space and encouraged them to contribute to the project. Library staff engaged one-on-one with library patrons, chatting about the theme, the design of quilt blocks, and the project in general. One comment summed up the interest: *"Don't see many exhibits like this in my area, but am looking forward to seeing this exhibit--love quilts and the history they show."* The community was elated at the idea of having a program relevant to the community's history and its way of life.

Kuumba Afrikan Quilting Guild: Eight adults learned to make small-scale quilts from start to finish with the Kuumba Afrikan American Quilting Guild on library sewing machines.

Story Quilts with Denise Lowe Walters from the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia: Forty-five people attended the story quilts lecture and exhibition,

Quilt Trails of Virginia: Twenty-one patrons attended the Quilt Trails of Virginia program which explored the locations and examples of barn quilt trails found in rural communities throughout the state.

Brief Summary

“Connecting Communities with Quilts” proves localities can build community through innovative library programming. With many assets already in place, including public space, partnerships, resources, dedicated staff, and creativity, libraries are common ground for all people to come together and learn more about each other and the world. By tapping into groups already using the library, Henrico County Public Library was able to attract and engage visitors through a program that was cost-effective and could be easily scaled and replicated in other localities.

Connecting Communities with Quilts
Supplemental Material

Quilt With Us



