



NASHVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION
NASHVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT

WRITING OUR
STORY TOGETHER

2024-2025



SHAWN BAKKER

The Story of a Magical Partnership



ast November, we gathered in the Grand Reading Room to hear James McBride at the Literary Award Gala. What made the evening extraordinary wasn't just his words spoken aloud—it was the way an 8 piece-band wove music and story together, each instrument adding its own beauty until the room was filled with something larger, richer, unforgettable.

That is the magic of partnership. Alone, each of us makes a difference. **Together, we create something transformational.**

With your generosity and the Library's vision, we are writing a story for Nashville that inspires, uplifts, and endures. Over the past year, your support made remarkable chapters possible:

- **Begin Bright takes flight.** In November, John Ingram hosted our campaign launch at Geodis Park and only a few months later, we celebrated reaching our initial \$20M goal. Library leadership has worked tirelessly to deliver a program on time and on budget, propelling early literacy opportunities to new heights across our community.
- **\$1M raised through events.** From James McBride's unforgettable performance at Literary Award Weekend to the beloved Picnic with the Library, you helped prove the healing power of stories. Families filled the Main Library for a Picnic with "the Wild Things" to support children's programming. They were joined for the first time by Studio NPL staff, bringing hands-on fun for kids (and kids at heart).
- **Expanding access.** Donors and corporate partners gave more than \$3 million, fueling innovations from the new Limitless Libraries Bookmobile to expanded programs for Nashvillians of every age.

- **Advocacy with impact.** With the help of nearly 4,000 "Thank You" cards from our NPL Ambassadors, city leaders approved additional operating funds, major maintenance investments, and plans for two new branches—an unprecedented commitment in a flat budget year.
- **Great friends raising funds** Carnegie Society members set a fundraising record, securing more than half a million dollars in unrestricted funds. Emerging leaders of Next Chapter Society coordinated a week of partnerships, leveraging support from all corners of the community for the inaugural Check Out Nashville.

This is *your* story.

It's about the lives enriched through literacy, the opportunities sparked through learning, and the connections that bind us closer as a city. With your continued support, we will keep extending the reach of our Library far beyond its walls to power literacy, life skills, and connection for all.

Thank you for being the hero in our story.

Gratefully,

Shawn Bakker, President
Nashville Public Library Foundation





Total revenue
raised for 2025

\$14.7
MILLION

How Donations Are Used

\$3.18M PROGRAMS + COLLECTIONS + LIBRARY NEEDS

\$8.37M Restricted for BEGIN BRIGHT EARLY LITERACY

\$1.47M FOUNDATION OPERATIONS

NPLF is working to build a steady stream of resources so that NPL can not only launch groundbreaking initiatives, but sustain them into the future. Using donor contributions and earnings from the Foundation endowment funds, NPLF secured more than \$3.2 million to benefit Nashville Public Library.

As a department of Metro Nashville, Nashville Public Library receives the majority of its funding directly from the city. Nashville Public Library Foundation was created in 1997 to enhance the Library's programs, facilities, and collections beyond the city's budget.



To view the Library Foundation's annual audited financial statements, as well as our IRS Form 990, visit www.nplf.org/annual-report.





FROM THE DIRECTOR

I believe in the power and the promise of public libraries.



When a community embraces a library the way Nashville embraces NPL, the possibilities are endless — and so is the joy. NPL's customers helped make the 2025 fiscal year a success.

They borrowed more than 7 million items from the library collection, attended more than 16,000 programs, visited our 21 locations more than 2 million times, and signed up for more than 47,000 library cards.

Thanks to the support of Mayor O'Connell and Metro Council, we were able to serve the community in meaningful ways.

- In one year since opening in June 2024, the **Donelson team**—made possible thanks to Metro's investment—brought 660 programs to more than 16,000 people, and readers there borrowed more than 200,000 books and materials.
- Projects to build **new branches at Hadley Park and Richland Park**—where the demand for programs and services has outgrown those spaces—moved forward into the design phase.
- Projects to **fully renovate our Green Hills and Hermitage branches**—which have not been renovated in 25 years—also moved forward.
- NPL also expanded customer service with a **real-time translation tool** staff now use to serve patrons in different languages.
- Meanwhile, thanks to the support of private donors and corporate sponsors through the Nashville Public Library Foundation, we were able to take NPL's mission even further into the community with programs such as **Bringing Books to Life, Limitless Libraries, the Nashville After Zone Alliance, Studio NPL, Be Well at NPL, and NPL's Digital Inclusion initiative.**

- What's more, **NPLF raised historic levels of funding for the new, groundbreaking early literacy initiative called Begin Bright.**

At NPL, the joys of reading, learning, and coming together begin and end with our customers.

From the songs and laughter of story time to the transformational moments of tech classes for seniors, our customers fill NPL with hope and positivity with every visit.

On behalf of the NPL staff, I want to thank you for supporting the library — as customers, as volunteers, and as donors.

Thank you for making the 2025 fiscal year one of excellence.

We are grateful for you. And we look forward to serving you in 2026.

Sincerely,

Terri M. Luke

Terri M. Luke, Director
Nashville Public Library



Great things happen
when a city
and a library
come together.



2,890,283
IN-PERSON VISITORS

28 
LANGUAGES
REPRESENTED

 **7+ Million** BOOKS & MATERIALS
13k+ IN PERSON EVENTS BORROWED

 **5.3+ MILLION**
DIGITAL
RESOURCES
BOOKS, MUSIC,
MAGAZINES

 **43%** OF NASHVILLIANS
HAVE A LIBRARY CARD
48k NEW LIBRARY CARDS
ISSUED THIS YEAR

DIGITAL INCLUSION TRAINING
540+ CLASSES
30+ COMMUNITY
PARTNERS



Highlights



LITERACY



Early Literacy/Bringing Books to Life

In just one year, the Early Literacy team completed 90% of their digital video content for Begin Bright, launched a new platform and app with Bounceback/3LS, and became the first library to collaborate with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to bring Little Libraries to every childcare center in Davidson County. The team developed resource guides and kits to support these libraries, crafted an evaluation plan with Vanderbilt University's Prenatal to Three Policy Impact Center, and wrapped up hundreds of literacy workshops for Spanish speaking families through their partnership with Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"We show teachers and parents how to adapt these tools for different scenarios and ages. We are able to provide free materials and resources to help educators and families start building key literacy skills. Expanding the program through Begin Bright will mean that we'll be able to provide more resources to ensure that all of those who educate, love, and care for young children have what they need!" *—Liz Atack, BBTL Program Manager*

LIFE SKILLS

NAZA (Nashville After Zone Alliance)

NAZA-funded programming made a significant impact through the "Just Us" mentorship program, a collaboration between Rocklife Youth and two alternative learning centers: Bass ALC and Johnson ALC. The program paired 40+ justice-involved youth with 20 trained volunteer mentors, providing trauma-informed, culturally responsive support. Activities included weekly mentoring, career readiness training, and graduation planning. Emphasizing character development and meaningful connections, the program helped youth envision a brighter future. 100% of seniors graduated, and 97% of participants avoided recidivism, showcasing the effectiveness of the mentorship model, character-building curriculum, and consistent support systems.



CONNECTION

"On our planting day for the Be Well Community Garden at Edmondson Pike, we were joined by students from Antioch High School. In speaking with them, I realized how affected they were by the recent shooting at their school. They said they were grateful to be able to come and find community in the garden and spoke of plans to return with their friends. When we were designing it, we envisioned the garden as a safe community space where everyone can come, feel welcome, relaxed, and heal, and it was a special moment to realize that is what it had become for the kids."

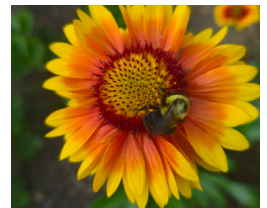
—Bassam Habib, Be Well at NPL Program Manager

"Mentorship is the difference-maker. When a young person knows someone is showing up for them every week—no matter what—grades stabilize, attendance improves, and hope returns. We're not just keeping students in school; we're helping them believe in what's next."

—Caleb Rogen, Rocklife Youth Executive Director

Be Well at NPL

Be Well at NPL expanded its programming to support early childhood education and health, adding pediatric physical therapy, pelvic floor workshops, and infant and toddler CPR classes, all of which were in high demand with waitlists.



FY25 BY THE NUMBERS

Your gifts to NPLF drive innovation,
expand NPL's reach and impact in our community.

The Power of Stories

Free programs that build literacy skills are the cornerstone of the library—the foundation for school success and a happy life.

15,888

Children, teachers, and parents experienced an NPL Early Literacy workshop.

93%

Parents report reading more often with their children after attending.

63,969

Smiles at a Wishing Chair Productions or Puppet Truck story time through 699 performances all over Nashville

86,000

Students and educators borrowed 62,516 books and media items—and Limitless Libraries delivered those library resources directly into schools.

40%

increase in Summer Reading Challenge participation. 40,000 MNPS students reading all summer long.

7

Languages available for Summer Reading Challenge logs

Every Skill. Every Stage.

From learning English to landing a job, Nashville Public Library Foundation donations help more than 20,000 people every year gain the skills and confidence to move forward.

2,400+

Adults strengthened reading, digital, and job skills through literacy programs—100% said the library's resources are relevant to their lives.

540+

Digital Inclusion tech sessions empowered seniors to connect online.

93%

Left feeling more confident using digital tools

12,000

Students explored technology and creativity through Studio NPL

75%

Reported higher academic achievement.

Where Community Grows Together

The Library connects us not only to the resources we need to grow, but to the community that enriches our lives.

27,000+

Visitors explored the Civil Rights and Votes for Women Rooms, discovering Nashville's history of courage and change.

2.9M

Neighbors came together across locations for 16,700+ programs—each one an invitation to learn, belong, and grow.

3,150

BeWell at NPL wellness programs—from movement and mindfulness to infant CPR and gardening—reached 30,000+ people.

100+

BeWell mobilized community partners to bring free wellness opportunities to all 21 branches, ensuring health and connection are accessible to everyone.

NUMBERS REPRESENT FISCAL YEAR 2025

SUPPORTERS

Generosity is at the heart of what we do. We are so grateful for our supporters whose investment brings literacy, life skills, and connection for all.

Gifts of \$1,000,000+

Dollar General Literacy Foundation
The Frist Foundation
Marlene and Spencer Hays Foundation
Stephanie and John Ingram, John R. Ingram Advised Fund+
Junior League of Nashville
Sandra Schatten Foundation

Gifts of \$100,000 - \$999,999

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^ Deceased

* Denotes membership in the Carnegie Society

+ Through the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee

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These organizations contributed financially and leveraged their resources to help NPLF raise additional community funds.

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East Nashville Beer Works
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Serendipity
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Get the full story.

Visit our website for NPL and NPLF full financial information, events recaps, program highlights, and branch facts.



Nashville Public Library Foundation is an independent registered 501(c)3 which raises private support for Nashville Public Library. Our mission is to fund, advocate for, and amplify Nashville Public Library to power literacy, life skills, and connection for all.

The mission of Nashville Public Library is to inspire reading, advance learning, and connect our community.

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Nashville Public Library
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