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Oklahoma Department of Libraries Awards Health Literacy Grants to Public Libraries and Literacy Programs

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries is pleased to announce grants amounting to \$249,189 were awarded to 50 public libraries and literacy programs. Funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services will support a variety of programs addressing the health and wellness needs of Oklahomans.

Individual health literacy encompasses the skills required to find, understand, and apply information for making health-related decisions. Health literacy impacts everyone, playing a key role in preventing health issues, safeguarding well-being, and effectively managing health challenges when they occur. Public health literacy challenges stem from a combination of insufficient awareness and understanding of health services and information.

According to Brooklynn Bors, programs and partnerships officer at ODL, the funds will assist public libraries in creating programs and materials to enhance health literacy skills within their communities.

“Public libraries in the state play crucial roles as partners in community-based health literacy initiatives. Through this project, libraries will contribute to advancing health and wellness in their communities based on needs identified through the most current health data.”

Library health literacy initiatives include fitness classes, healthy cooking demonstrations, and gardening programs. In the past, more than 25 Story Walks or Story Trails have been funded by ODL. Story Walks are a simple way for families to engage in a story while walking at their local park. A complete list of all the Story Walks in the state is available [on the ODL website](#).

ODL has been awarding health literacy grants for more than a decade. However, public libraries can only address a limited number of health issues affecting the overall well-being of the state. Per the 2022 [America's Health Rankings Annual Report](#) by the United Health Foundation, the state's overall health ranking remained at 45th place.

Twelve years ago, ODL and the state's literacy providers set out on a mission to help Oklahomans learn about healthy living. In the past year, health and wellness programs throughout the state were attended by more than 29,000 participants.

“Even through this success, there is more work that needs to be done in our state to address these low levels of health literacy,” Bors said. For more information, contact the Literacy Resource Office at ODL.