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Oklahoma Health Literacy Grants Awarded to 41 Public Libraries and Literacy Programs for 2022-23 Activities

Eleven Years In, Oklahoma's Innovative Health Literacy Initiative Continues to Grow

A record 41 public libraries and literacy organizations received grants this fall totaling \$218,879 for Health Literacy programs, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) has announced. The grants are funded courtesy of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and will provide a diversity of programs targeting the health needs of Oklahomans.

Throughout the coming year, grantees will be hosting various exercise programs, healthy cooking demonstrations and nutrition classes, staging mini health fairs, creating walking challenges, sponsoring programs on mental health and wellbeing, and providing information on home gardening.

The individual programs are tailored to the library or literacy organization's community, according to Leslie Gelders, administrator of ODL's Office of Literacy Development.

"Applicants identify particular health issues in their communities based on the most current health data and develop a grant plan to help address those issues," Gelders said.

"Unfortunately, the grantees have a lot of health problems they can address," Gelders said. According to the *2021 America's Health Rankings Annual Report*, produced by the United Health Federation, the state ranks 45th in the overall health of its residents.

"Obesity, smoking, the low consumption of fruits and vegetables, lack of physical activity—as well as the lack of access in rural areas to physical and mental health providers—all add up to this low ranking," Gelders said.

Twelve years ago, Gelders and the state's literacy providers began exploring ways they could help Oklahomans learn about healthy living. The initiative launched in 2012 with five pilot sites. Originally geared to help adult learners understand health information, the initiative began expanding in its early years, incorporating exercise programs and sessions on healthy cooking and nutrition.

“When we started the initiative, we had no idea of the impact it would have in communities across the state, or of the support it would receive from libraries, local partners, and Oklahomans of all ages,” Gelders said.

More than 19,000 Oklahomans participated in health literacy programs at 37 sites last year. “With 41 sites this year, the impact will be even greater,” Gelders said.

Gelders reports 80 libraries and literacy programs have taken advantage of the grant program during the past 11 years.

“Many sites have applied for the grants over multiple years to further develop and continue their health literacy efforts,” Gelders said. “And we always have some new sites coming onboard each year.” There are 10 first-time grantees this year: libraries in Eufaula and Grove, and eight branch libraries of the Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma County.

As the initiative has gained momentum, other state and federal agencies and members of the private sector have expressed interest in collaborating with ODL and the health literacy sites. Gelders said partnerships are a key to the success of the initiative, and one of the reasons why the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services cited Oklahoma’s health literacy efforts as innovative.

“Improving the health of Oklahomans is a major challenge, and we’re always looking for opportunities to partner with more organizations. We need all hands-on deck,” Gelders said.

2022-23 Grantees and Planned Programs

Ada Public Library – \$9,000 Grant

Program activities include weekly Yoga and Tai Chi classes, healthy cooking classes, canning classes, and sessions on container gardening.

Bartlesville Public Library Literacy Services – \$9,000 Grant

The literacy program plans weekly exercise classes, ranging from Yoga to Zumba to Xtreme Hip Hop; healthy cooking demonstrations; sessions on mental wellbeing; and presentations and information sessions on a variety of health topics.

Beaver County Pioneer Library – \$6,500 Grant

The library will expand their garden for outdoor activities and programs, and host adult exercise classes. Children will be able to participate in garden story times.

Community Literacy Center (OKC) – \$9,000 Grant

Miles and Smiles presentations will emphasize the importance of healthy eating and staying active. Programs on mental wellbeing will provide strategies for self-care. The Center will integrate their traditional literacy mission by incorporating writing projects for clients to share what they have learned.

Creek County Literacy Program (Sapulpa) – \$9,000 Grant

The program is planning workshops, cooking classes, Tai Chi sessions, and a Healthy Selections Adult Learner Book Club to address the health needs of the community.

Donald W. Reynolds Public Library (Durant) – \$4,000 Grant

Planned exercise activities will feature Yoga and Zumba classes. Diabetes education, healthy cooking demonstrations, and self-defense classes for women round out the offerings.

Eastern Oklahoma Library System – 6 Grants totaling \$20,537

Delaware County Public Library (Jay) – The library will host a mini health fair, and offer Yoga, senior exercise classes, and exercising with Hula Hoops. The library will purchase exercise and recreational equipment for check out by patrons.

Eufaula Public Library – The library will host a series of Yoga classes.

Grove Public Library – Planned classes include Yoga, exercise classes for seniors, and exercising with Hula Hoops. The library will provide exercise and recreational equipment for check out by patrons.

Rieger Memorial Library (Haskell) – The library will continue its *Healthy Haskell: Move, Hydrate, Nourish* programming by offering Weight Watchers meetings, exercise sessions for seniors, and the *Move More, Eat Better* program offered through the Oklahoma Healthy Aging Initiative.

Muldrow Public Library – Tai Chi, Line Dancing, Yoga, and Yoga for Children classes will keep the community moving. Other programs include diabetes education, container gardening, and nutritious cooking demos.

Muskogee Public Library – The library will encourage physical activity with Music and Movement classes, as well as new content and programs for the community Story Walk. Biking programs will take riders along local trails. Biking safety lessons and a biking repair station are also planned.

Friends of Elgin Public Library – \$2,600 Grant

The local Friends are helping the Elgin library host CPR/First Aid classes, water aerobics sessions, and hiking activities.

Gleason Memorial Public Library (Ringling) – \$2,363 Grant

Yoga classes will be held for both adults and children. Also planned: CPR classes, monthly Kids in the Kitchen healthy cooking programs, a babysitting class, and a program on helpful herbal teas for cold and flu season.

Great Plains Literacy Council (Jackson and Harmon counties) – \$9,000 Grant

The Council will use the grant funds for three part-time staff (including two bilingual staff) to develop and administer programs, and to recruit and support targeted audience members. These staff members will also promote and evaluate all of the health literacy programs and activities, including Walking Readers, a Wellness Symposium, programs on children and mental health, and other mental health programs.

Guymon Public Library – \$5,000 Grant

The library will establish a Story Walk in the community.

Lawton Public Library – \$9,000 Grant

CPR classes will offer pediatric and adult first aid as well as infant/child/adult CPR. Tai chi classes will be hosted, and two desk exercise bikes will be provided for use in the library.

Metropolitan Library System (Oklahoma County) – 8 grants totaling \$32,000

A variety of programs at eight system branches will show community members how to start and nurture gardens to grow healthy foods. Program topics at all eight branches will include spring and fall gardening, rainwater harvesting, seed saving, backyard chickens, food preservation, and healthy cooking. Garden tools will also be available for lending. The library branches in Oklahoma City and surrounding communities that are hosting the program series are **Almonte, Belle Isle, Capitol Hill, Ralph Ellison, Ronald J. Norick, Southern Oaks, The Village, and Warr Acres.**

Miami Public Library – \$9,000 Grant

The library is planning Kids Cooking classes, healthy eating demonstrations, Tai Chi classes, Line Dance classes, a mobile Story Walk for outreach, and a jump rope clinic.

Mustang Public Library – \$9,000 Grant

The library will purchase a greenhouse for gardening programs, in conjunction with the Oklahoma State University garden next to the library. Healthy eating programs and exercise classes are also on the agenda.

Nora Sparks Warren Library (Pauls Valley) – \$9,000 Grant

The library will create health check-out kits for patrons to use to check blood pressure and pulse. Kits will be available that include a light therapy box, a step counter, and a kit to help engage people with dementia. The library will host Yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi classes. Healthy cooking demos and programs on gardening are also planned.

Piedmont Public Library – \$9,000 Grant

A three-month wellness class will target cardio health and strength building. The library will also host a women's health retreat, Dad Bod fitness class for men, family fitness classes, music and movement programs for pre-K, Yoga sessions, water exercises, and a Talk to a Nurse book discussion.

Pioneer Library System – 11 grants totaling \$46,929

Blanchard Public Library – The library is focusing on the power of walking this year. A Story Walk will be established, an adult walking book club will be sponsored, and Walk with Ease programs will be scheduled for seniors. The library will create a punch card for a walking incentive program; meet your walking goals and the local Friends will give you a free book!

McCloud Public Library – It's all about healthy eating this year in McCloud. The library will host Eat Your Veggies Storytimes for youngsters, Rethink Your Drink programs for teens, Healthy Snacking programs for children and teens, a Teen Cooking Club, and healthy cooking demos. Another program will tell participants how to read nutrition labels.

Moore Public Library – The library will host group exercise programs, healthy cooking demonstrations, and wellness and self-care programs.

Newcastle Public Library – Yoga and dance classes for adults and teens will be scheduled. Art therapy classes will be held in the library for adults and teens, and at seniors living centers. Healthy cooking demonstrations are also on tap.

Norman Central Public Library – Fitness programs include weekly Yoga classes, a series of family Yoga classes, programs on strength building and dance, and monthly nutrition classes.

Norman East Public Library – Norman’s eastside library will host Yoga/Pilates classes; a series of dance, meditation, and strength building classes; and nutrition programs.

Norman West Public Library – Weekly fitness programs (Yoga and Tai Chi), monthly programs on nutritional cooking.

Purcell Public Library – Yoga classes are being scheduled to address both physical and mental wellbeing.

Shawnee Public Library – Music and Movement classes will be held for children and families. Such programs assist children with motor skill development. These programs also increase phonological awareness and support literacy development.

Tecumseh Public Library – Exercise classes are planned for adult, children, teens, and seniors. A women’s health retreat and a personal nutrition health retreat will be held along with a self-defense family program.

Southwest OKC Public Library – A four-week wellness course will assist participants in creating and adopting healthy habits. Tai Chi classes for seniors, exercise and dance classes for children, healthy eating classes, and a program on self-care for caregivers are also planned.

Southern Oklahoma Library System (Carter, Love, Johnston, Atoka, and Murray counties) – \$9,000 Grant

The library system will use the grant to fund a variety of programs at their branches. Exercise classes will be held at targeted branches (Yoga, strength and flexibility, Tai Chi). Other programs include healthy food demonstrations, programs on canning, information classes on skin care, and programs on stress management and travel safety. Special Make and Take programs will allow participants to make Do-It-Yourself health aids, such as stress relievers and non-toxic bug repellants, cleaning solutions, and body scrubs.