

Library's Adopt-a-Book adds loved reads to collection

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Feb 1, 2019

The Charles County Public Library system revived its Adopt-a-Book program last fall to help residents get involved with the library's book collection — and to have patrons share their favorite books with the wider reading public.

“Adopt-a-Book is a wonderful way for our community to give back to the library while engaging with our collections,” said Jessica Kahan, the systems acquisitions manager.

“We encourage a lifelong love of reading, and Adopt-a-Book is a great way for donors to adopt the books that most speak to them. We all have our favorite books,” she added.

For \$25, patrons can adopt a book which will include a nameplate inside. The book can be adopted in someone's memory or to honor a special person. The adopter is listed on the library's website, and when the book reaches the end of its lifecycle they are given the first crack at purchasing the book. The lifecycle varies but generally can be years.

“Children's books get worn through quickly — lots of little hands loving picture books. ... A lot of our books enjoy a fairly long life with healthy use,” Kahan said.

Each month the library puts on its website a themed, curated list of books available for adoption. Those selections are books Kahan and other librarians would like to see in the collection.

“We have put books on the list where we’re trying to gauge community demand and interest in the titles and purchase them as a result of them being adopted,” Kahan said. “Sometimes that could also apply for a special illustrated edition.

“For example ‘The Princess Bride’ [by William Goldman], we had copies of the text in the collection, and we found this really amazing, spectacular illustrated edition. And we placed it on our November Adopt-a-Book list, and that’s actually one of the titles that got adopted twice. Now we’re able to enjoy not one but two copies of this fabulous edition.”

As much as possible, the library tries to place the books at the branch the adopter frequents but sometimes it makes more sense for the library’s collection to have that book elsewhere, or the branch already has a copy of the adopted book.

“I think it’s been an amazing thing for our community. I think it really showcases how we’re trying very hard to listen to our community and respond to what they need, and to really let the community know that the library is here to help them, to serve them — it’s for our community, that’s what a public library is,” said Janet Salazar, the library system’s executive director.

One such community member and avid reader, Ashleigh Skinner of Pomfret, adopted “The Tales of Beedle the Bard” by J.K. Rowling, a book of children’s stories.

“At first I thought I was going to adopt a children’s book because I have two young kids,” Skinner said. “And then I looked at the whole list of books and saw there was ‘The Tales of Beedle the Bard,’ and being a huge Harry Potter fan, I thought, well, the first book I’m going to adopt is this one because I would want to read that book if I didn’t own a copy myself.”

Like Salazar, another Harry Potter fan, Skinner owns the whole collection of books.

“I don’t think you can ever have too many copies of Harry Potter books because they are loved by everyone,” Skinner said. “I have two copies of the whole collection ... and lots of fandom.”

“Originally it was launched in September 2017,” Erin Del Signore, the library’s marketing manager, said of the Adopt-a-Book program. “We had a launch event and we started sending out the lists. However, as with any organization, we had some staff turnover ... so it wasn’t getting the full support, so we did a relaunch [Sept. 1 last year]. The response has been amazing from the community.”

The library has had more than 50 books adopted and ready for people to check out. In fact, Skinner’s adopted book was already making the rounds among readers back in December.

“It’s really great to see the response we’re getting to Adopt-a-Book because it really just underscores what I already know — the public library is very important to this community, and well loved by its community,” Salazar said.

“I think it’s a great program, and I definitely plan on adopting more books,” Skinner said. “As my children get older, they’ll be able to read older books, maybe something I’ve adopted for them. We love the library. We love it here.”

The Adopt-a-Book lists can be found at www.ccplonline.org/adopt/.