

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped



BRIGHT FUTURE

SHARE OUR VISION, THAT ALL MAY READ.

Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 2024



*Reading is for Everyone coffee mug, a prize of the Winter Reading Challenge
Photo courtesy of Lacey Downs*



OKLAHOMA
Rehabilitation Services
Oklahoma Library for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped

Winter Reading Wellness
>> Page 4

Letter from the Director

A Look Back, A Look Forward

Dear Patrons and Readers,

The past year has been full and exciting. In 2024, we began our collaboration with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections to create a prison braille program. The Library's Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center now has a substantial collection of Pre-K children's twin vision books to put into the hands of Oklahoma's children. We began circulating magazine subscriptions directly. Our collection has continued to grow exponentially and our librarians stay focused on making sure they're available to you. The Library expanded summer reading activities. The Recording Studio received equipment upgrades and can now produce twice the number of materials for our patron's enjoyment.

Sadly, this year we lost one of our stalwart volunteers, Kent Graham. Kent's legacy will, however, carry on as the donations received in his memory will fund an equipment upgrade for our Oklahoma Telephone Reader Program. The old analog telephone system hub will be digitized to a more modern and efficient audio service.

In 2025, we have a lot to look forward to. Patrons can participate in a beta test for My Talking Books, a new Alexa skill that will help patrons access BARD books through voice commands. The new Digital Talking Book Machine DA2 with wifi capability, will also be released. The AIM Center prison braille program looks to produce twin vision books for kindergartners and grades beyond as the prison inmates advance in their certifications. The Library is hosting a Winter Reading Program.

As we look forward to more opportunities to provide even better services, we hope current and future patrons find more enjoyment and pleasure listening to our talking books.

From all of us at your Library we wish you all a wonderful new year.
- Kevin Treese

Want to receive Bright Future in a different format?

Bright Future is also available by email, in braille, on the Oklahoma Telephone Reader (405-522-1896 or 1-855-887-6397), as an audio file on our website and as an accessible PDF document on our website at olbph.org.

To receive Bright Future by email or braille, update your subscription preferences by calling 405-521-3514 or emailing olbph@okdrs.gov.

Bright Future Staff

Kevin Treese, OLBPH Director; Kaitlyn Evans, Editor-in-Chief; Lacey Downs, Braille Editor; Kat Jensen, Audio Editor

Contributors

Erin Byrne, Kat Jensen, Lacey Downs, Kevin Treese

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

Melinda Fruendt, Executive Director;
Tracy Brigham, Division Administrator - Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services

Dr. Janet C. Barresi, Theresa Flannery, Kelsey Lee

Send questions, story ideas and comments to olbph@okdrs.gov. Visit our website at olbph.org.

Follow us on social media:



facebook.com/OLBPH

Twitter: [@OLBPH](https://twitter.com/OLBPH)

Bright Future is published quarterly by the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 300 NE 18th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73105. OLBPH and DRS do not endorse any product or service referred to by this newsletter. Articles written by third parties reflect the opinions of the writer and are not necessarily the opinions held by OLBPH or DRS. OLBPH and DRS make no claims to the accuracy of statements made in such articles. This publication is authorized by DRS in accordance with state and federal regulations, with copies deposited with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries Publications Clearinghouse. This newsletter was printed by Oklahoma CareerTech Printing Services. Cost of printing and distribution was \$3,980 for 2,000 copies. DRS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, genetic information, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, disability or ancestry in employment or the provision of services. Copyright 2024 by the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. For additional copies, contact the OLBPH at 405-521-3514.



The lobby of the OLBPH building looks out at a winter landscape. Photo courtesy of Kevin Treese

Cover Story

Winter Reading Improves Wellness

Among New Year's goals, many people create goals for wellness, such as beginning an exercise routine, eating healthier, or spending more time outdoors. This year, make one of your wellness goals to read more.

Reading has many benefits, including reducing stress, improving sleep, slowing mental decline and improving personal relationships by increasing empathy toward others. Reading on a regular basis thereby supports your overall health and wellbeing.

Winter reading, in addition to the benefits listed above, has the added benefits of helping to combat winter-related health risks, including Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), or the winter blues.

Adult OLBPH patrons can start building healthy reading habits this year by participating in the Winter Reading Challenge - Book Bingo.

Read books from January 1 to February 28, 2025 to earn prizes. Adult OLBPH patrons who read five books and complete a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line on the OLBPH's bingo card will earn a Reading is for Everyone coffee mug. Patrons who get a blackout (all 25 books read) will also earn an entry into the grand prize drawing for an iPad.

Play the Book Bingo challenge by downloading the bingo card and logging

the title, author and matching bingo square of each book you read from January 1 to February 28. Book titles may be used only once per card, and only one entry allowed per person. Books must be from OLBPH or BARD.

Submit your entry by 5 p.m., March 7 by 1) Mailing your bingo card to the OLBPH at 300 NE 18th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73105, or 2) emailing a scanned PDF or picture of your bingo card, or a typed list of books read with title, author and matching bingo square to olbph@okdrs.gov.

Funding for the Book Bingo Challenge is generously provided by Oklahomans for Special Library Services. For full rules, and to download your bingo card, visit <https://oklahoma.gov/olbph/winter-reading.html>.

Read for Adventure

Thanks to the OKC Zoo and OG&E and in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, children who check out Juniper's Butterfly Garden will receive a voucher for four guests to visit the Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden for FREE!

Reservations are not required for entry into the Zoo, and Read for Adventure vouchers can be redeemed at any Zoo ticket window. Vouchers expire June 30, 2025.

Check out Juniper's Butterfly Garden on BARD as DBC18974, or call the OLBPH at 405-521-3514 to request it on cartridge or in braille. Claim your voucher by emailing olbph@okdrs.gov after reading.



Book Corner

2024's Most Popular Reads

The Lost Coast: A Novel by Jonathan Kellerman, DB123155

It's been almost a year since Clay Edison was forced out of his job at the coroner's bureau. Now he's on his own, working as a private eye. Clay is brought a fraud case that begins with a man surprised to learn that he's been named the executor of his grandmother's estate. Her accounts are a mess, and not everything is adding up. As Clay dives deeper into a decades-old scheme targeting the vulnerable, his investigation leads him to a bizarre town buried in the remote California wilderness. The residents don't care much for outsiders. They certainly don't like Clay asking questions. And they'll do just about anything to shut him up.

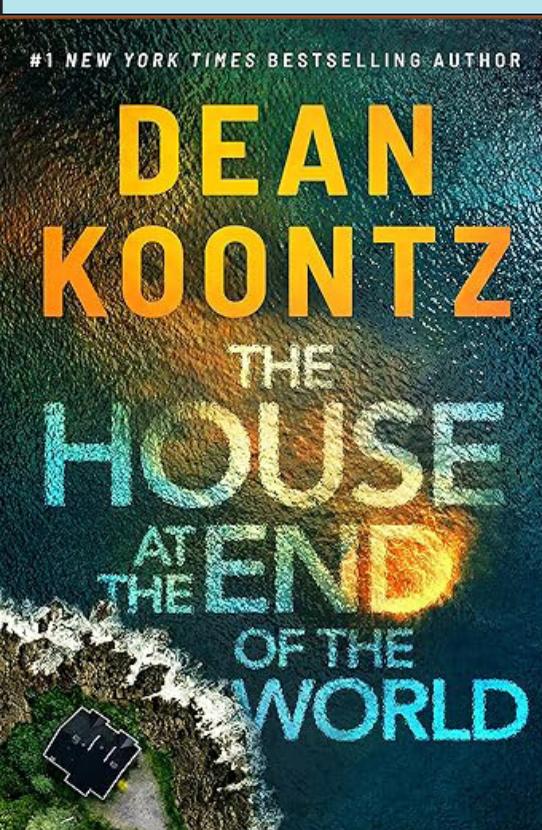
The House at the End of the World by Dean R. Koontz, DB121303

In retreat from a devastating loss and crushing injustice, Katie lives alone in a fortress-like stone house on Jacob's Ladder island. Once a rising star in the art world, she finds refuge in her painting. The neighboring island of Ringrock houses a secret: a government research facility. And now two agents have arrived on Jacob's Ladder in search of someone (or something) they refuse to identify. Beyond the menacing men, a greater threat has arrived, one so strange even the island animals are in a state of high alarm. Katie soon finds herself in an epic and terrifying battle with a mysterious enemy that could bring about the end of the world.

Patrons loved these; you might too.

Start your 2025 reading wish list with some of the most popular books in our catalog.

These were some of the most read books of 2024.



The Wild Side by Fern Michaels, DB124030

Called back to the Office of Special Investigations for a highly specialized assignment, school guidance counselor Melanie Drake must pose as an escort to infiltrate a dangerous international group of billionaires during a decadent dinner to collect information vital to national security.

Shadow of Doubt: A Thriller by Brad Thor, DB123803

A mysterious cargo plane, flanked by a squadron of Russia's most lethal fighters, has just taken off from a remote airbase. Closely monitored by the United States, no one inside the Pentagon has any idea where it's going or what it's carrying. A high-level Russian defector, a walking vault of secrets that could shatter the West, seeks asylum in Norway. Across the continent, in the heart of Paris, a lone French agent stumbles upon a conspiracy so explosive it could ignite a global firestorm. As alarm bells ring in Washington, the CIA's most lethal weapon, Scot Harvath, is forced to choose between his conscience and his country.

Passions in Death by J.D. Robb, DB123948

On a hot August night, Lt. Eve Dallas and her husband, Roarke, speed through the streets of Manhattan to the Down and Dirty club, where a joyful, boisterous pre-wedding girls' night out has turned into a murder scene. One of the brides lies in a pool of blood, garroted in a private room where she was preparing a surprise for her fiancée - two tickets to Hawaii. Despite the dozens of people present, useful witnesses are hard to come by. It all brings back some bad memories for Eve, who once suffered an assault in the very same room - but she'd been able to fight back and survive. She'd gotten justice. And now she needs to provide some for poor young Erin. Eve won't stop until she finds the killer who destroyed this couple's dreams before the honeymoon even began.

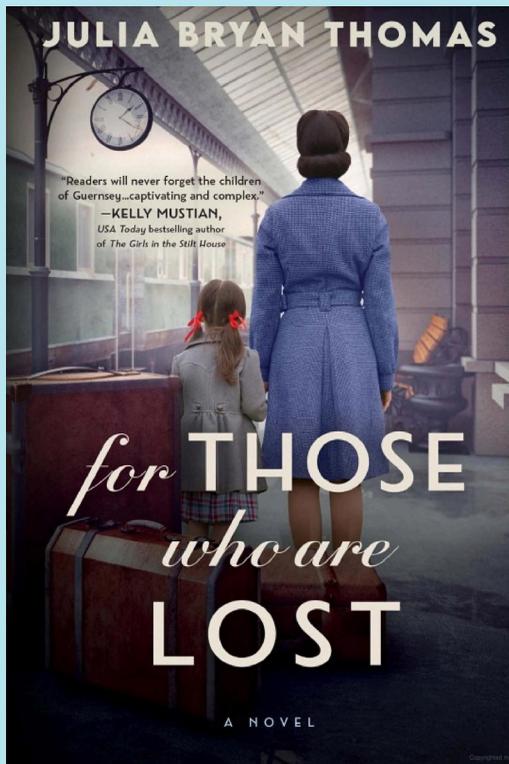
Hard to Kill: A Jane Smith Thriller by James Patterson and Mike Lupica, DB122869

Attorney Jane Smith is mounting an impossible criminal defense. Her client, Rob Jacobson, is the unluckiest of the lucky. No sooner is he accused of killing a family of three than a second family is gunned down. Jane's career has spanned from beat cop to courtroom. She's tough to beat and even tougher to kill. The defense may never rest.

Oklahoma Reads

Showcasing Oklahoma's Stories

For Those Who Are Lost by Julia Bryan Thomas, DBC18971

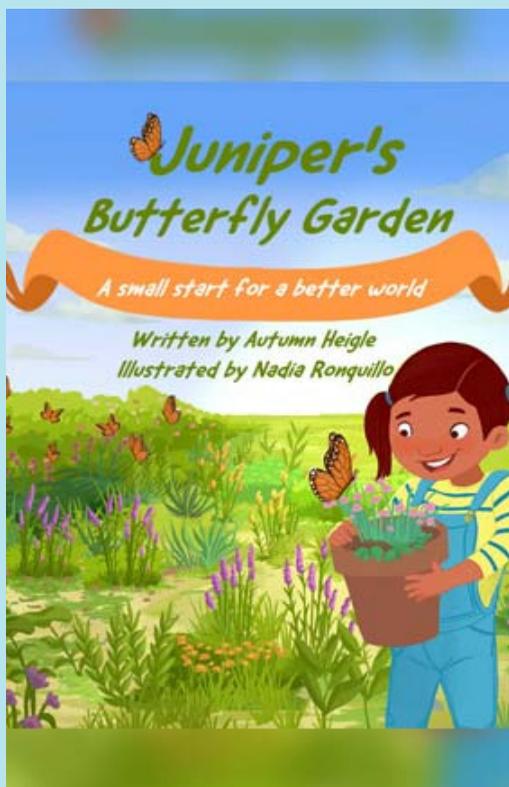


This debut novel by Oklahoma author Julia Bryan Thomas is Oklahoma's 2023 Great Reads from Great Places national representative.

During WWII, on the small island of Guernsey, islanders make the heartbreaking choice to send their children to safety in England not knowing if they will ever see them again. The Simons send their children Henry, 9, and Catherine, 4, with Henry's teacher, Helen, to protect them on the journey to England.

But Helen's sister Lily shows up while fleeing an abusive, childless marriage, and as the ferry is about to leave she offers to take Helen's place. Lily then accompanies the children to England but in a last-minute decision once they arrive, decides to put Henry on the bus to the boarding school and walks away with Catherine. Her decision impacts everyone's lives long after the war.

Juniper's Butterfly Garden by Autumn Heigle, DBC18974



The story follows a child's journey as she learns about monarch butterflies and how she can help conserve this important pollinator in her own backyard. Includes information about planting butterfly gardens.



Author Spotlight

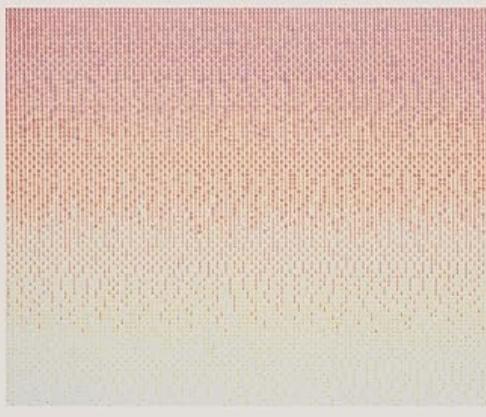
Rob Roensch is the author of a story collection, *The Wildflowers of Baltimore* (Salt, 2012), a novella, *The World and the Zoo* (Outpost19, 2020) and a novel, *In the Morning, The City is the Prairie* (Belle Point Press, 2023). He teaches at Oklahoma City University.

Rob Roensch
Photo by Carrie Gardner

In the Morning, The City is the Prairie by Rob Roensch, DBC18975

**in the morning,
the city is the prairie**

rob roensch
a novel



It's the last cool night of spring. Connor declares he is going to become a poet by fall. He has hooked his knees around the top bar of the swing set and is hanging upside down. He's still wearing his suit; his tie dangles and shimmers. I haven't taken off my Costco name tag.

"You can't just decide to be someone," I say. I'm on a swing drifting back and forth at the speed of a cradle.

"We're 23," he says. "This is America. You say something you're going to be by September."

"I don't know," I say. "The same. Alive."

This coming-of-age novel shows the struggles many face as 20-something young adults trying to find our place in a world that appears to be full of stronger, more passionate, and more ambitious people than ourselves.

Volunteer Spotlight

A Lifelong Passion for the Written Word

Renee Sharpe English began volunteering at the OLBPH in February of 2024, but she began her work with the written word in elementary school as a library aid. Renee loved helping people find books to read and even shelving the books. Growing up, her parents took her to book mobiles, where she first discovered her love for the smell of books.

Renee has also always had a passion for helping others, both in her 44-year career as an executive assistant, keeping others organized and things running smoothly, and as a volunteer.

“I believe volunteering to be mutually satisfying and something we can have fun with while making a difference at the same time,” said Renee.

Before starting as a volunteer at the OLBPH, Renee volunteered for 10 years at a similar organization in Dallas, where she recorded full-length books. Renee contributes to the Oklahoma Telephone Reader program. She reads and records newspaper articles for patrons to play back.

“I love to think about the end user being able to stay connected to the world through my efforts,” said Renee.

Renee loves to bake and can jellies, and competes in state fairs. “It’s so fun to come up with new ideas and ways to combine things, trying to impress the judges,” said Renee. She also enjoys exercising and traveling.



Inside the OLBPH

2024 Wrapped - OLBPH by the Numbers

300,000+
Books Mailed

**1 New
Website**

4,900+
**Patrons
Served**

500+
New Patrons

6 Talking Books
Recorded &
Produced

**45+ Braille
Transcriptions**

**298
Digital
Talking
Book
Players
Repaired**

**1,200+ AIM Center
Students Served**

Refer a Friend, Schedule a Presenter

Do you know someone who could use the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped's services? Give them the gift of reading by sharing information about the OLBPH!

As a reminder, OLBPH books are available to Oklahomans who cannot use standard print due to low vision, blindness, or a physical disability that prevents them from holding printed books, such as severe arthritis, paralysis or cerebral palsy. Some people with reading disabilities, such as dyslexia, are also eligible.

You can refer others to our FAQ page for information about services and eligibility at <https://oklahoma.gov/olbph/frequently-asked-questions.html>.

You can also schedule a presenter from the OLBPH by calling us at 405-521-3514 and asking for our public information officer, Kaitlyn Evans. Kaitlyn can give presentations to groups including book clubs, libraries, community centers and group living homes.

Informational presentations are also available to groups who want to learn more about reading accessibility, including schools and in-service training.

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped
300 N.E. 18th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

**FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND**