

Make the Library Part of Your New Year
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A very happy New Year from New Ulm Public Library to you all! People often look at demarcations in time for mental encouragement in making a change. A new year, a new season, a birthday, an important date in your life – all of these can cause us to reflect on the past and present to consider the future. There is something about transitions that naturally invites us to think about change. Sometimes we wish things wouldn't change. Other times we hope every day that they will.

For some people, the image of a library is a monolithic unchanging thing. Shushing, bespectacled old ladies and silent aisles of possibly dusty books are conjured by Hollywood's imagination. The truth, however, is that the things that don't change in a library have nothing to do with what you see and everything to do with why we are here. The library exists to help you engage your mind, question perspectives and ideas, access information and services, find enjoyment, and connect with others. Those are the things that don't change. Everything else – the books we have, the building we're in, the way things are organized, whose smiling face greets you, the programs we have happening – can and do change. Libraries are institutions of adaptation by necessity (and by preference). How can we serve our community in the same old way when our community is always changing as time passes, people move in or out, jobs change, events happen in the world, and so many other factors?

We hope you will make the library a part of your changes for the New Year. Might I humbly suggest just a few reasons to do so? First, the library is a place with so many wonderful services that we offer or provide for free or low cost. We have printing, copying, faxing, and 3D printing for nominal costs. We have a meeting room available for organizations to reserve for meetings, presentations, and events. We provide free access to thousands of art and craft classes, collegiate and professional examination and licensure preparation courses. We have places to relax and rest, free computer and wifi access, study carousels, wifi hotspots for checkout, activity tables for children and adults, and much more.

Second, the library protects your freedom to read. Research published by the University of New Zealand in 2022 analyzed the US news media landscape for the use of emotionally charged language from 2000-2019. Across all political viewpoints, the frequency of negative terms increased and positive terms decreased. We live in a busy world with many perspectives and ideas. When people become polarized due to the influence of others, it is important to remember that you can think for yourself. At the library, you are free to engage with differences of opinion, research a topic or question, or challenge your own bias or assumptions about yourself, others, or the world without judgment, restriction, or reproach.

Third, the library offers thoughtful, engaging, and entertaining programs and activities for all ages. Our Library of Things has a wide variety of games, technology,

experiments, instruments, and outdoor seasonal equipment to check out for use. We offer regular monthly programs for children, youth, and adults covering many different interests and types of activities. Helping a child learn to read? Come to one of our story times! Looking to learn more about history? Check out our History Book Club or our Civil War Round Table! Want to bond with a child over a fun activity? Register for one of our monthly age-targeted activities! Looking for online content? Check out the library's YouTube channel to watch authors, musicians, local actors, and library staff in a variety of settings, or you can check out the library's Discord server to meet new online friends, participate in our virtual programming, or discuss interesting books or your favorite internet memes.

Fourth, but not lastly, we really enjoy seeing you at the library. Seeing you makes our day. We're happy to help you however we can – especially to access all the great things we have for you to do! Some things at the library are always changing, but in this new year, our devotion to our community certainly isn't one of them.

The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The library will be closed until 4 p.m. on Tuesday, January 10 for staff training.