

Being Thankful for the Library
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It's a tradition at our house to make a poster in November with a large, painted, bare tree on it. We get cardstock and special hole punches to make dozens of leaves in a variety of colors. Every night, each person in our family writes on a leaf just one thing they are thankful for in their life. We use glue sticks to put our leaves up on the tree on the wall, and the barren tree at the start of the month becomes full of colorful leaves by the start of December. It can be tricky at times to make sure kids aren't repeating the same ones a few weeks later, but the end result is something that never fails to move me. The insights of the very young also help me see things to be grateful for that I hadn't really considered. If you haven't been to the library in a while or you use it every day, here's a little reminder about all the good things you have that we as librarians seek to promote and defend.

You have the opportunity to read this. I have the opportunity to write it, and the newspaper has the opportunity to print it. Or not. In today's talk of fake news and social media manipulation, we can be grateful that we have the choice of what to read and watch. There are a number of countries in the world where that is not the case. I could be arrested in some of them just for writing this. At the library, we defend your freedom to choose. What you read, how you read, when you read, how much you read, or why you read aren't conditions for you here. All are welcome, and we seek to preserve each patron's right to privacy, no matter what you check out.

You have the opportunity to disagree. You could dislike what I write, and you could even write a letter to the editor expressing your opinion. Your neighbor could disagree with both of us. That's okay. There are places in this world where disagreement is silenced with prisons, torture, and death. The library protects your right to think for yourself. We don't censor materials because of difference of opinion, belief, or perspective. We guarantee each patron has the ability to see for themselves, to learn all sides of a debate, to question narratives, and to compare and contrast viewpoints. If you have an interest in a topic, author, issue, or book, we'll do our best to give you the opportunity to read it. No judgment, coercion, or threats allowed.

You have access to ideas. Not only do you get to read what you want and decide to agree or disagree, but you also have the opportunity to seek the unknown, to look for answers, to build on the work of others, to invent something new, to be inspired, and much more. If every book in our library were of the same genre, it would be a poor service to our community. Some would find it wonderful, but it would exclude many others from the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the freedom to read.

We hope you'll take time this month, or even just today, to consider the good things you have in your life. If life has got you down, and you can't think of anything else, remember, you still have the library, and if you have the library, you have the world.

The library will close early on Wednesday, November 22 at 5 p.m. and will be closed Thursday, November 23 and Friday, November 24 for the Thanksgiving holiday. We will reopen with our regular hours on Saturday, November 25. 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.