

Winter Reading Program
By LeRoy Harris
Programming & Technology Services Librarian

Happy New Year! As the winter winds of January roll in and the temperature drops, it's time for our annual winter reading program for adults. The program began this week and runs through the end of February. To participate in the program, you just need to stop by the circulation desk to register and pick up your tracking sheet. If you've never participated in our winter reading program, you might be wondering what it's all about. Well pull up a comfy seat, wrap yourself in a nice warm blanket, and grab your next read as I explain.

Just like the summer reading program for children, our winter reading program began as an initiative to encourage people to read more. As a new year begins and people reflect on the year just passed, the winter reading program is a great excuse to find something to read. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's survey data for 2024, less than 50 percent of adults in the United States last year read at least one book. The benefits of reading for cognitive function and mental and emotional health are many, but sometimes people need an incentive to get them started. Our winter reading program is a great motivator for you to start the year reading. Why, you ask? We always have a theme to make things fun, and there are prizes too!

Besides the intrinsic benefits of reading, participation in the winter reading program gives you the chance to get a free book and to enter your name in a prize drawing at the end of the program with multiple prizes available. If you finish five books, you get to select a free book from our prize shelf. Many new books and popular authors are available thanks to generous donations from the community. In addition, each time you read five books, you get your name entered into our prize drawing that happens at the end of the program. You can earn up to five entries – that's 25 books worth of reading. Now at this point you may be wondering, well what qualifies as a book? Do audiobooks count? Absolutely! Do ebooks count too? You bet! Do I have to read a particular genre? Nope. For some years, our theme matches genres to our tracking sheet for fun activities, but this year you can read any genre you like. What about nonfiction? Certainly! How about graphic novels? Those count too!

Our theme for this year's program is "Raise the Temperature." Your tracking sheet has a large thermometer on it with clearly labeled degree marks corresponding to tracking sections. Each five books you read completes a tracking section for you to fill up your thermometer by ten degrees. Your first five books read fill up the bulb of the thermometer and get you to zero degrees, so if you don't want to freeze, keep reading! Once you've read 20 more books, your thermometer will cap out at 40 degrees for a good spring thaw, and each five book section enters your name into the prize drawing. Any time during the program, you can stop by the circulation desk to show your tracking sheet progress and fill out your name slips for the prize drawing. Staff will initial and date your tracking sheet for each section you complete.

The program ends on February 28th, but you have until March 15th to turn in your tracking sheet. To help keep you motivated, we're doubling our previous year's number of prizes from five to ten for the drawing at the end of the program. We are extremely grateful to the Friends of the New Ulm Public Library for sponsoring our prizes for our winter reading program.

If you're looking for that excuse to read more or try something different then come sign up for the program, or you could even join one of our three book clubs. You can find out what they're reading and when they meet on our website at www.newulmlibrary.org.

The library will be closed on Monday, January 20 to observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday-Thursday from 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday-Saturday from 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.