ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2025

HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

LEARN. GROW. CONNECT.

Dear friends,

This year marks an exciting new chapter as we celebrated our 85th birthday and put our community-shaped strategic plan into action. This annual report highlights the progress we are making toward our three key result areas:

- Early Learning: All children enter school ready to learn
- Youth Empowerment: Teens and young adults feel a sense of agency and belonging
- Community Connection: An inclusive, connected community where everyone feels they belong

These priorities reflect the hopes and aspirations of our community. On the following pages, you see how we are working with partners to make progress. Together, we are turning these priorities into measurable results — building a community that empowers every person in Howard County.

Thank you for making this work possible. Your advocacy, partnership, and support keep Howard County Library System at the heart of learning and connection. We look forward to building a future where everyone can thrive.

Sincerely,

Tonya Aikens, HCLS President & CEO

Liz Banach, HCLS Board of Trustees Chair

Through **112** On the Road to Kindergarten visits, we reached **3,020** young children – about one in six under age five in Howard County.

235
students visited in Head Start classrooms

Early Learning

ADVENTURES BEGIN BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

As we implemented our new strategic plan, we focused on what we do best — connecting with families in ways that matter. Our collaboration with Community Action Council of Howard County's Head Start exemplifies this commitment. Teachers report that library-led classes spark curiosity, nurture a love of reading, and help children feel prepared for kindergarten.

One educator shared:
"This partnership stresses the importance of literacy and takes students on adventures with every visit."

Library instructors visited Head Start classrooms **81 times, leading 202 classes,** and sharing hundreds of books with students and educators.

Beyond our walls, Library on the Go! brought learning directly to families. The team brings books, activities, and joy to neighborhoods where families face barriers to visiting a branch. Families received free books and activity kits, and 97 percent of borrowed items were children's materials.

One parent described how her son, who has sensory challenges, was able to explore books without feeling rushed — a reminder of why this work matters.

Our mobile library also serves multilingual families. One out of every 20 items borrowed from the van was from the children's world language collection — compared to fewer than one in 100 items in branches.

Teen Empowerment

BELONGING, CONFIDENCE, AND CREATIVITY

Teens took center stage in our **2025 Summer Reading program**, and their enthusiasm told a powerful story.

This program isn't just about books; it's about belonging. When teens feel connected, they discover agency and confidence — key priorities in our new strategic plan. We saw that connection in countless moments.

One parent shared that her son never reads. After hearing about Summer Reading Adventures at his middle school, he rushed to get a copy of two books, *How It Happened: Sneakers* and *Wrecker*.

His mom looked close to tears as she said, "I don't know what the librarian said, but thank you!"

60

percent increase in participation over FY24 in Summer Reading Adventures for teens

Stories like this one reflect a bigger trend as completions rose **22 percent**, which includes **843 middle school students** in Howard County Public School System's Academic Intervention Summer School.

Bauder Book Talk
with Jason Reynolds

The Bauder Book Talk is our most anticipated teen event. In November, we welcomed author Jason Reynolds for an unforgettable conversation with 460 middle school students.

It was more than an event; it was a moment of inspiration.

Teen engagement doesn't stop when summer ends. Teens lead classes, join book clubs, and show up for events like Teen Live and the Bauder Book Talk.

Through our Teens Teach initiative, local youth step into leadership roles as they plan and teach classes on everything from Conscious Closet to Mindfulness Painting to Debate Academy. In FY25, **teens facilitated 17 sessions with 573 attendees**, including a debate series that ended in a spirited competition with 75 participants.

Book clubs at Howard and Long Reach High Schools give teens a chance to connect even if they can't make it to a branch. **Six sessions at Howard averaged 32 attendees**, and the sessions at Long Reach led to their students participating in the Bauder Book Talk for the first time.

At Teen Live, a celebration of creativity and connection, nearly 700 teens attended six events, diving into activities like 3D printing and the A/V Lab. We're planning to expand these STEAM experiences for 2026.

700

teens attended six Teen Live events

732

attendees at 38 Beyond Words programs

One parent wrote, "Beyond Words enables [my son] to be part of the library community in ways that he can access...We are beyond grateful for the opportunity for our son to feel included and welcome in a public space."

Community Connections

LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS

Our commitment to community is about creating spaces where everyone feels welcome.

The Beyond Words initiative hosted many programs (**23 for adults, 15 for teens**), primarily at East Columbia and Miller branches. Attendance at Miller steadily grew from 10–12 people to more than 30 per session.

Language learning thrived as well. We offered **932 bilingual and world language classes, drawing 13,830 attendees**. Programs like Cuentos en Español and World Languages Café built bridges across cultures, where participants shared stories, food, and friendship.

2,000

participants in DIY and Makerspaces classes

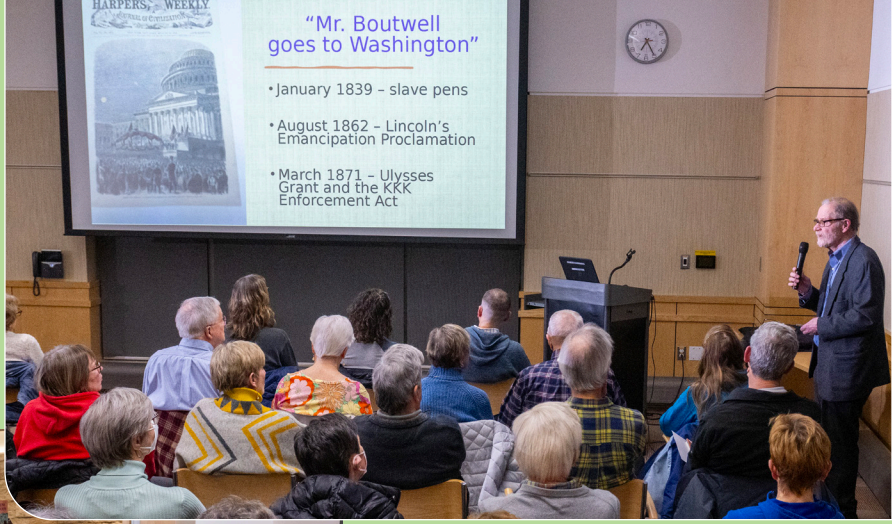
Creativity flourished in our DIY & makerspace classes, where community members of all ages learned skills from sewing to 3D printing. The DIY collection circulated **more than 10,000 items**, empowering community members to tackle projects from gardening to home improvement.

HCLS also served as a vibrant gathering place for statewide trainings and events for Maryland public libraries — including the Emerging Adults Summit at Elkridge Branch, Library Associate Training Institute graduations at Miller Branch, and trainings around early childhood education and AI.

Our connection with veterans deepened as well. Through programs like the Veterans Book Group — held quarterly with steady participation — and *A Survivor's Story: The Attack on the USS Liberty*, veterans and community members found space to share, listen, and honor lived experiences.

At Savage Branch, we hosted monthly visits with a social worker from the Baltimore VA Community Resource & Referral Center. Veterans can ask questions, seek support, and get information about the Center.

The refreshed Equity Resource Center serves as a welcoming hub for learning and reflection. Community members borrowed **16,896 items** from the Equity Resource Collection, exploring identities, histories, and perspectives.



HCLS invited residents to learn, reflect, and connect with a wide selection of author visits – from Dr. Ken Conca's exploration of Ellicott City's resilience, to Jeffrey Boutwell's (above) insights into democracy and history, to conversations with celebrated writers including Victoria Christopher Murray (left), Denise Williams, Alka Joshi, Neil King, Jr., Chef Sean Sherman, and former White House butler Alan DeValerio.

COLLECTION

Items in Collection: 1,142,370

Physical: 836,958

- Adult: 445,794
- Children & Teens: 391,164
- Print: 697,037
- Audio: 41,986
- Video: 84,292
- Other: 51,637

Electronic: 305,412

Card holders: 179,464
Borrowed: 5,115,647

Physical items: 3,943,000

- Chromebooks & hotspots: 2,395
- Learning activity kits: 812
- DIY Tools: 20,522
- Video Games: 25,091

Online: 1,172,647

- E-Book: 459,923
- E-Audio: 470,840
- E-Serial: 190,247
- E-Video: 51,637
- Database: 2,046,092

USE

Physical visits: 1,526,162

Website hits: 1,317,972

Research assistance: 30,233

AskHCLS questions answered: 1,348

Classes & events offered: 8,757

Attendance: 234,652

SOCIAL MEDIA (compared to FY24)

Facebook
net audience growth: 82.8%
engagement increase: 125.5%

LinkedIn
net audience growth: 891.3%
engagement increase: 1,250.6%

Instagram
net audience growth: 85.6%
engagement increase: 58.2%

MANY THANKS TO OUR

PRESIDENTIAL CIRCLE ($10,000+)

Dr. Lillian Bauder

Yolanda and Francis Bruno Family Fund

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union

Friends & Foundation of HCLS

Howard County Public School System

Howard Community College

Howard Hughes Corporation

Josephine B. Scheffenacker Education Trust

M&T Charitable Foundation

$5,000-$9,999

The Common Kitchen at Clarksville Commons

Ronald and Cynthia Gula Charitable Fund

Hoenes Family Foundation

Howard County Office of Human Rights & Equity

$1,000-$4,999

Ayers Saint Gross

Columbia Association

Columbia Community Care

Columbia Film Society

Corporate Office Properties Trust

Ron and Ellen Flynn Giles

Grimm + Parker Architects

Horizon Foundation

Howard County Economic Development Authority

Kiwanis Club of Ellicott City

Maroon PR

SPONSORS & DONORS

Open Sense Solutions LLC

PC Connection

Henry and Nancy Yee

Up to $1,000

Capital Native Nations

Nola Cromer

OverDrive

United Way of Central Maryland

Tributes

In memory of Mahendri Pal Bedi: Susham Bedi, Mimi Forbes, Mona Gahunia, Greg Kasten, Ratna Kota, Mike McCord, Lori Rosman, Kevin Slack, Frederick Smith

In memory of Cecil G. Christian, Jr. & Marian S. Christian: Cicely Christian

In memory of Kathleen S. Glascock: Robert Owings Glascock

In memory of Aileen McCaffrey: Charles H. and Carol L. Clark

In Kind

Baltimore Orioles

Brown & Associates

The Business Monthly

Clark's Elioak Farm

Columbia Inspired

Columbia Mom

FunFitnessFamily

Howard County Economic Development Authority

Maryland Science Center

Maryland State Fair

Maryland State Library Agency

National Aquarium in Baltimore

National Media Productions, LLC

Plan It Perfect

Rouge Catering

Sobar

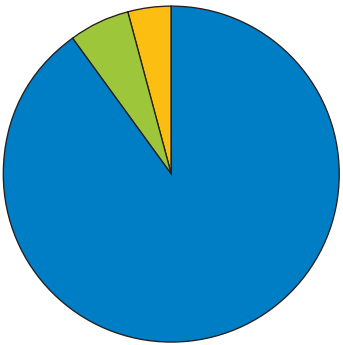
Wendy's

The Wine Bin

WYPR 88.1 FM

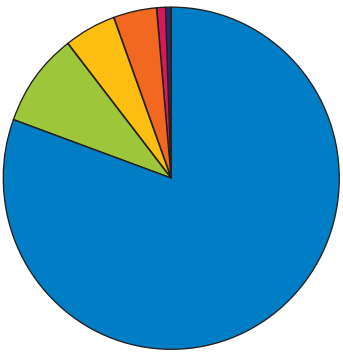
FINANCIALS

Operating budget	$29,386,283



Revenue

Howard County	90%
MD State Library Agency	4%
HCLS/Grants/Gifts	6%



Expenditures

Salaries and benefits	80%
Curriculum	9%
Contracts	5%
Supplies	4%
Equipment	1%
Professional Development	.3%

Hi
hclibrary.org

HOWARD COUNTY
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