



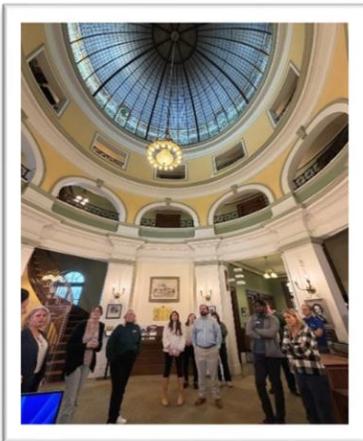
# HRLS

## *Director's Report and Highlights*

*January 2026*

### *Ruth's Tea Room*

A notable accession to the Stewart Bell Jr, Archives in January included two small batches of letters from the family of Ruth Jackson. **Ruth Jackson** founded **Ruth's Tea Room** in the mid-1920s at 128 East Cecil Street, and it continued operating until the early 2000s under the care of her daughter **Vivienne**. Ruth, an African American businesswoman and her husband Boyd, made the Tea Room more than just a restaurant. Especially in the period of segregation, it was a place where people of all races and from all walks of life could meet and feel welcome. The Tea Room closed in 2005, and the building was later demolished, though a **Memorial Park** now stands in its place to honor Ruth's legacy. At some point following the closure of the restaurant, papers related to the family were scattered. Recently, two small lots came to light through an auction listing by a dealer in North Carolina. Our bids were successful, and the letters to and from Ruth, Boyd, and Vivienne are now part of the **Vivienne Jackson Family Papers**.



### *Up and Coming Community Leaders*

Each January, the Handley Library branch hosts a Community Leadership Program session sponsored by the **Top of Virginia Regional Chamber of Commerce**. As part of the session on non-profits, participants are taken on a tour of the branch to learn about the history of building, the role the library branch plays in the community and details about library materials and services. A number of the participants used the visit as an opportunity to sign up for a library card.

### *America 250*

The Handley Library branch was also the site of the first of four sessions of the **America 250 Book Circle**, a book club sponsored by the **Friends** celebrating our country's founding. The book discussed was *Young Washington: How Wilderness and War Forged America's Founding Father* by author Peter Stark. Appropriately, the group met in the West Reading Room under the painting "People Appealing to Washington" an interpretation of events in Washington's life during his early years on the frontier.



## *Especially for Kids*

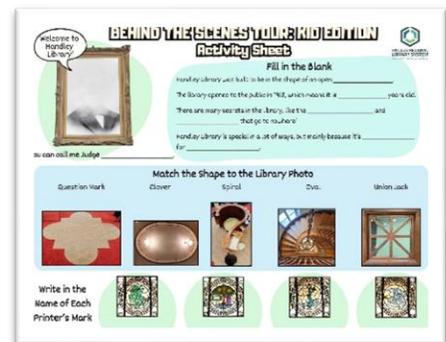


In January, the Clarke County branch launched its new **“School’s Out” Program**. The staff mapped out the Clarke County Public School schedule to identify which days have been designated as vacation or staff-only workdays. On the days when the schools are closed to students (for non-weather-related reasons), CCL will provide afternoon activities for all age groups. There will be board games for the teens, Lego’s and age-appropriate board games for grade school kids and larger blocks for younger ages.



January also saw the Technical Services’ upgrade to one of the branch’s **AWE computers** in the children’s room. The new version has an expanded catalogue of learning-based activities that include coding, bilingual programs, and new programs to engage an expanded age range.

The Handley Youth Services Department kicked off the New Year with a new seasonal program, **“Behind the Scenes Tour: Kid Edition”**, that will take place quarterly. This program aims to provide a kid-friendly version of the popular Behind the Scenes Tour of Handley Library for adults. Sixty kids and caregivers attended the first program in January and used the new activity sheet throughout the interactive tour,



And at the Bowman branch **Winnie the Pooh Day** was celebrated with the **Aylor Middle School Library Club** assisting with the event and running the activity tables like the Honey Tasting Table shown on the left.

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*The Handley Regional Library ... [handleyregional.org](http://handleyregional.org)*