

Youth Services Report
December 2025-January 2026
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*An **invited community** is a community that feels at home in their library.*

Em says, “Word is spreading to the larger community that visits the NCRC to shop for food about the Monday Oasis storytime. A person on desk at the CAC told me several people had asked when it was.”

Em will be visiting 2nd grade classrooms in early February to booktalk—short, engaging presentations of book titles designed to spark interest in reading.

Youth Services hosted two New Year’s events this year—New Year’s Eve Eve for Teens and Unicorn Noon Year’s Eve for Kids and Families. 11 teens came for New Year’s Eve Eve and 80 people attended the Unicorn Noon Year’s Eve. Cat says, “I love seeing new faces at the library. Programs like these are great for that!”

*An **included community** is a community in which every person is seen, heard, and engaged.*

Em offered a Black Friday storytime (on “too much stuff”) and an open-art program for older kids on Friday, November 28, and had 70 participants. It can be hard to predict if there is community interest or need for programming around holiday dates, but the day after Thanksgiving has been a well-attended program date for two years in a row now.

Cat and Teen Tuesday participants are working to host a mini golf program for kids and families over Spring Break. They’ll be preparing obstacles and course materials at some of their weekly programs in January, February, and March.

Em has been hard at work lining up presenters and programs for the first half of 2026. Planned events include:

January

- January 10: Stuffed Animal Sleepover
- January 10: A visit from local author (and third grade teacher at Greenvale Park Elementary) Kelly Johnson and her bearded dragon Tom, for a program around her graphic novel *Once Upon a Tom*.

February

- February 28: Potato Derby Orientation. Em writes, “At orientation, you’ll get your wheels, your potato, and the derby rules. You’ll learn the physics behind crafting a super-speedy spud from St. Olaf’s STEMQuest team, get inspired by images of potato cars past, and learn what Race Day on March 14 will look like.”

March

- March 14: 2nd Annual Potato Derby
- March 24: KPop Demon Hunters: Trivia, Crafts, and More program
- March 25: The Works: Light and Kaleidoscopes
- March 27: Sustainable Safari

April

- Heart of the Beast Theater—“Trees Are Cool” puppet show for Earth Month

May

- Working with local artist Rocky Casillas Aguirre to co-create a program for kids for Mental Health Awareness Month

Summer

- Bruce the Bug Guy
- Carlson’s Lloveable Llamas

*A **connected community** is a community with access to needed resources for all.*

Em says, “I spent the last large chunk of the money in the juvenile ebook budget, focusing again on e-audiobooks (about 80% of my order).”

Cat is working to schedule visits to The Key to promote library services and resources and build relationships with the staff and youth.

*An **empowered community** is a community that is equipped for a changing world.*

In December, both Em and Cat were notified that they were selected to receive scholarships from the Public Library Association to attend the PLA Annual conference in Minneapolis. Circulation Assistant Natalia Torres Camargo was also selected for the PLA Scholarship.

*An **informed community** is a community that understands what their library offers and shapes their library with feedback.*

Based off teen feedback, Cat organized two sessions of Dungeons and Dragons for winter campaigns this year. One group for experienced players and one for beginners. Groups are meeting concurrently, every other Saturday from January to April. Teens from TAB serve at the DMs (Dungeon Masters) for the group.

As a team, we also set our department goals for 2026.

Northfield Public Library
Youth Services Framework
2026

The mission of Northfield Public Library is “inviting exploration, empowering people, engaging community.” Youth-focused activities that work to fulfill the mission of the

library include planning, collections, spaces, staff and training, technology and access, programs and services, and communication.

Northfield Public Library values:

- Hospitality
 - Create an inviting environment, inside and out
 - Nurture a welcoming staff culture
 - Uplift and celebrate diversity
- Trust
 - Listen and respond to feedback from the community
 - Be a reliable community partner
 - Be a responsible custodian of resources
- Access
 - Guarantee equitable access to resources
 - Develop staff leadership and expertise at all levels
 - Provide free access to all expressions of ideas without restrictions
- Innovation
 - Encourage creative problem solving
 - Embrace playful learning and inquiry
 - Anticipate and respond to community needs
- Connection
 - Engage with the community where they are
 - Reach out to the underserved
 - Foster conversation across differences

Five strategic priorities have been identified in the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan:

1. An invited community is a community that feels at home in their library.
2. An included community is a community in which every person is seen, heard, and engaged.
3. A connected community is a community with access to needed resources for all.
4. An empowered community is a community that is equipped for a changing world.
5. An informed community is a community that understands what their library offers and shapes their library with feedback.

The goal of creating a framework that describes and encompasses the range of services provided to the community by the Northfield Public Library is to encourage the development of holistic plans for youth-focused services, resources, and communication plans that reflect the library's values, as well as evaluating their effectiveness in fulfilling the library's strategic priorities.

Planning

Youth-focused services are based on input from the community, research, best practice, broad trends, and community needs that support the library as third space. Specific objectives include:

- Use current research about child and teen developmental needs and the role of libraries in supporting them.

- Scan developments in technology and the online environment to ensure library services remain relevant.
- Incorporate best practices as identified by expert professionals and professional organizations, in and outside the library world.
- Link into local community needs.
- Lobby for appropriate resources to support youth services in the library.

Action plan for 2026:

- Engaging in planning that establishes an annual view of programs/services.

Collections

Collections for young people should be responsive, relevant, and accessible.

- Promote the collection through youth-focused displays, reading lists, online access to the catalog, and peer-to-peer recommendations.
- Provide a range of formats that are informed by new developments in youth literature.
- Consider input from children, teens, caring adults, and adults who work with youth when making selections in addition to traditional sources such as library jobbers, review journals, and social media.
- Review collection use regularly to evaluate the public's engagement with youth collections, including circulation statistics, in-library use, appeal, appropriateness, and relevance.

Action plan for 2026:

- Look at creative ways to promote the collection through youth-focused displays.
- Continue to refresh book lists with an eye to supporting readers to know why a book might appeal to them beyond the main theme of the list.
- Develop Decodable reader collection to support emerging readers.
- Develop collection development plan for Spanish collections.
- Complete work started in 2025 to relabel the Parenting Collection books to reflect the thematic organizational scheme that was implemented.

Spaces

Spaces for children, teens, and families at Northfield Public Library should:

- Extend a spirit of welcome and belonging.
- Embrace playful learning and inquiry.
- Have furniture and fittings appropriate for the needs, preferences, and use of the spaces by the intended age group.
- Highlight and showcase the collection and resources available.

Action plan for 2026:

- Evaluate Oasis, Bookmobile, and regular off-site program locations (such as Central Park) and develop best practices for programming in those spaces to better meet our goals.
- Use results of evaluation to begin a long-range plan for youth space enhancement/changes.

- Continue grant work to replace children's shelving and address safety and accessibility concerns with new layout.

Staff

Youth Services staff work collaboratively with other library staff and throughout the community to provide positive, proactive engagement of children and teens in libraries.

Staff seek to:

- Provide opportunities for staff development and mentoring of all staff
- Provide opportunities for teens to volunteer and/or work in the library
- Advocate for the needs of children and teens in the library
- Participate in professional development and contribute to the body of knowledge about children and teen service provision
- Collaborate on children and teen projects with other colleagues and community organizations

Action plan for 2026:

- Prepare and deliver training for interested staff regarding basic child and adolescent development, reasonable expectations, and suggestion for redirecting energies.
- Incorporate Reader's Advisory recommendations, tips, recent trends, etc. at monthly All-Staff meetings.
- Prepare and deliver training for staff regarding the Parenting Collection so they can better assist patrons in utilizing the materials.

Technology

The library aims to provide equitable access to online resources, and emerging technologies. Specific objectives include:

- As new resources or technology is introduced at the library, work to develop policies for use that minimize barriers for children and teens.
- Maximize access to library collections via interactive online tools.
- Provide opportunities to develop information literacy skills.

Action plan for 2026:

- Assess Youth/Teen webpages; determine what information is most helpful to share with Emerging Technology Librarian.
- Assess youth STEAM kits; identify opportunities for continuation of service.

Programs and Services

Programs and services to children, teens, and caregivers endeavor to:

- Empower, connect, and showcase the creativity of young people.
- Foster an invited and included community by encouraging social interactions and a sense of belonging.
- Support the recreation, reading, and information literacy needs of families and young people in nontraditional settings.
- Work in partnership with other agencies providing services for children and young people.

Action plan for 2026:

- Clarify Youth and Outreach department roles and responsibilities; work together to identify potential community partners or opportunities
- Make space during department meetings to discuss age-group program challenges, successes, and plan for upcoming events

Communication

- Develop communication and promotional strategies targeted toward children, teens, and interested adults.
- Utilize networks for communicating with other agencies serving young people as clients to cross-promote activities.

Action plan for 2026:

- Develop a regular flow for sharing Youth library events and resources both internally and externally
- Prioritize gathering images from programs of both staff delivery and participants for future marketing campaigns, presentations, etc.