Library Utilizes CARES Act Grant to Combat Digital Divide

MCPL Garners Nearly $50K in Grant Funding, Boosts Branches’ Exterior Wi-Fi Signals

Greater Kansas City, MO – This month, Mid-Continent Public Library finished installing technology at 32 of its locations across the Kansas City metro to boost Wi-Fi signals into the parking lots outside its buildings. Funded by a CARES Act grant (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security), administered by the Missouri State Library, the project is aimed at expanding public access to high-speed Wi-Fi, a resource that is especially important as many schools and workplaces continue to operate virtually.

“No more than ever, internet access is imperative to be an active member of our society, but not everyone has the luxury of having an internet connection at home,” said Bryan Gash, Chief Technology Officer at MCPL. “Boosting Wi-Fi signals into the parking lots outside our buildings not only supports social distancing by allowing users to spread out, it also ensures internet access 24/7 for those who can’t make it into our branches during business hours—something we know is very important for working families.”

The Library received $49,782 in grant funding to undertake the Wi-Fi extension project, which is one of the many ways it has altered its offerings during the pandemic. In addition to boosting Wi-Fi, MCPL has:

- Launched curbside and drive-up window service for contactless delivery of materials
- Converted all in-person events, including storytimes, to virtual platforms, such as the MCPL360 Facebook page
- Acquired more digital materials (books, movies, music, and more) for customers to access from home
- Implemented a wide variety of new safety procedures, including frequent cleaning/sanitization, requiring masks inside the buildings (both staff and customers), limiting capacity inside its buildings, and quarantining returned items

More information on how the Library has adapted to safely serve the community can be found at mymepl.org/COVID.

*This project is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the Missouri State Library, a division of the Office of the Secretary of State.*
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Founded in 1965, Mid-Continent Public Library is the largest library system in the Kansas City metropolitan area, operating 33 locations and two Library-To-Go locations and serving more than 816,000 people in Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties. MCPL is an award-winning library system that strives to enrich citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration. Connect with the Library on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.