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John Rucker, director of the Branch District Library, is one of several library staff offering online programs while the doors are closed due to COVID-19. (ROSALIE CURRIER PHOTO)

Closed library doors don't stop programs

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Libraries are supposed to be quiet, but not this quiet.

Branch District Library in Coldwater and the six local branches have been closed and programs cancelled for a

month due to the COVID-19 stay home mandates.

Although the doors are closed, the library is alive and well with all sorts of options for reading, education and engaging patrons, said John Rucker, director of Branch District Library.

Internet access

Wi-Fi in all the parking lots of all six branches is free and is available at all times, Rucker said.

Library cards

"We renewed every one's library card that would have expired during our time closure so patrons can continue to enjoy our online services that require registrations without a library card," Rucker said.

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PROGRAMS

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Residents in their service area – Branch County and Allen Township of Hillsdale County – who don't currently have a card, can apply at www.BranchDistrictLibrary.org/apply. Library staff will put a card in the mail for the new patron and email their library card number so they can start using it immediately.

Digital services

Digital resources available for patrons include OverDrive that has books and audiobooks and Hoopla that offers books, audiobooks, comics, music, TV, and movies. The number of titles and materials from those two sources exceed what's on the shelves. And increased funding for digital services was approved by the board of trustees, Rucker said.

Digital magazines

"Very soon we'll be offering a new magazine service with hundreds of popular titles, hopefully in time for National Library Week, April 19-25, Rucker said.

To get a sneak peek at what will be available through the new service, RBdigital Magazines, visit www.rbdigital.com/the-librarynetworkmi/service/magazines/landing

and asked permission on the off chance they might grant it," Rucker said. "Turns out, the lead singer/songwriter's mother is a former school librarian and they were as excited as we were to do this project."

Due to publisher terms, this reading on the website is only for library patrons who type their library card number into the box provided.

Another example is Lindsay Villa, teen services coordinator, reading a chapter every night from the Chronicles of Narnia, "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe." She read the final chapter on Saturday, but the videos are available on the library's Facebook until June 30.

Villa plans to start a new book after a short break.

Library staff has also posted videos of craft and science projects and book discussions with more coming soon.

The Quarantine Book Club meets on Facebook at 8 p.m. on Thursdays and Rucker will soon announce a weekly live trivia night.

Staff members are planning a virtual discussion on Zoom of the One Book, One County "Shores Beyond Shores" by Irene Butter. The child Holocaust survivor was scheduled to visit the county in late March but the event had to be cancelled.

Love your librarian

National Library Workers Day is April 21. There are 36 Branch District Library staff members working in various branches. To show appreciation for library staff, patrons are invited to "Submit a Star" by providing a story about a favorite library employee and how they impact patrons and the community. Visit the BDL website to learn how to honor your favorite librarian. It is part of National Library Week, April 19-25.

Don't turn in your books

When has a library ever ask patrons to keep their books past the due date? But that's what BDL is asking for now.

"Please just keep them at home from now," Rucker said. "With only essential workers authorized to enter workplaces we can't handle everyone returning their books right now."

Also please hold on to any donation for a while.

"Please not put donations in our drop boxes," he said. "Our drop boxes are small, and with reduced staff presence, it would just be too much."

Children's story time is at 10 a.m. weekdays with either a library staff or a notable public figure reading the story.

One example is a video of Rucker reading "Flamingos on the Roof" by Calef Brown. To enhance the story with music, Rucker contacted a Texas band, Little Jack Melody and His Young Turks, who let them use selections from their recordings to accompany the reading.

"They have no connection to the library, we just thought the music would go great with the book