

## Libraries provide — countywide!

### Explore the smallest and largest libraries in Umatilla County

By Heather Estrada

*For Go! Magazine*

What does “from the least to the greatest” mean to you? Does it bring up a negative connotation?

For me, at the Umatilla County Special Library District, it’s a reminder of the exceptional library service that is offered from the least (and that only refers to the size of the library and the number of patrons it serves) to the greatest (ditto).

This month the spotlight is on one of our smallest libraries (Helix) and one of our largest (Pendleton). At both libraries you will find a great selection of books and other items to check out, staff looking to serve each person who walks through the door, and programs for all ages and interests.

The Helix library is in a gorgeous historic building that also houses the Helix City Hall, and its service area includes 373 people (or 0.62% of the county population). The library director, Annette Kubishta, has been at the Helix library since 2002. She’s a lifelong fan of libraries and began taking her young children to the Helix library immediately upon moving to town. The director at the time eventually asked her if she’d be willing to take on the children’s programming and thus began Annette’s journey as a library employee. She’s been the director since 2017.

Annette’s favorite part of working at the library is how the library pulls the community together. This was on full display last month when the library partnered with JD Kindle of Oregon East Symphony to host a concert. It was well attended and such a fun way to draw people from Helix and the surrounding area in for a night of fun.

Annette aspires to do this day in and day out by creating spaces in her library for everyone. She has a teen area, a toddler area, and a sensory area to touch and play with objects. Her summer reading program was full of fun events beyond the JD Kindle concert. It

included a Pete the Cat ice cream social, an Italy day, a pet day and a parrot day. She wants people to know that they are welcome in the library. It’s not just a place to find books,



**This summer, the Helix Library had an Italy night with a variety of Italian treats.**

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**Kubishta**

but a place to just come and be, to hang out. Additionally, she has a great “Library of Things” which includes a pickleball set and a kayak. There’s plenty to check out beyond books!

In addition to drawing the community together, Annette has been joyfully surprised by the friendships she’s gained working with the other libraries. An example of one such friendship and mutual collaboration can be found at one of the biggest libraries in the district, the Pendleton Public Library. Annette has enjoyed working together and sharing ideas with Director Jennifer Costley and Assistant Director James Simpson.

The Pendleton library differs a bit from Helix in that it serves around 22,052 of our county residents or 36.4% of the county’s population. With a larger service area comes the opportunity for more staff and both a director and assistant director. With two top-level staff members (as well as additional full and part-time staff) Pendleton has the capacity for more programming. Pendleton’s summer reading program was stuffed full of excellent activities for all ages. They offered a Pokémon club, Teen escape night and a robot building event for adults.

Also, the Pendleton library recently purchased a Mobile Library (Bookmobile) which allows them to take the library to various places in the community for storytime and an opportunity for people to

check out books.

When I sat down to talk with James about the Pendleton library, he had some of the same ideas and dreams as Annette. He wants people to know that the library has something for everyone. If you have a need, come and see if it can be met with something the library offers. And if not, they will investigate how to bridge the gap to fill that need.

The Pendleton library houses the Umatilla County Law Library and James is the de facto law librarian. He enjoys the fact that he can make an impact, in small and big ways, every day.

James came to libraries five years ago because the job fit his family’s schedules and he’s found joy in being able to make a difference in people’s lives. He encourages everyone to come check out what the library is offering as there is likely something for you. Pendleton, like Helix, has a great Library of Things.

They have items such as disc golf sets, a blow-up paddleboard and American Girls dolls. This is a great way to test drive something you are interested in — for free!

James spearheads a teen area that includes video game systems, and often offers challenges and competitions for teens to compete in. Regardless of your age or interest, James, along with Jennifer and the entire Pendleton staff, work hard to offer

useful and meaningful services and activities for their patrons. James comes to work each day because he likes helping people, he likes serving the community and making a difference.

You will find this level of commitment and service in every Umatilla County library. It doesn’t matter how big or how small, you can find great offerings, things to do and great people to help you. Check out your local library soon. — Heather Estrada is the district director of the Umatilla County Special Library District. Reach her at [director@ucslid.org](mailto:director@ucslid.org).



**Simpson**



**Pete the Cat often showed up at library programs in Helix.**

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