

## Echo library plans to celebrate the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday

by Heather Estrada

(East Oregonian) Go! article - March 25, 2026

On July 4, 2026, the United States of America will celebrate its semiquincentennial anniversary, or in regular English, it's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. Across the country there will be various celebrations to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence that took place on July 4, 1776. In Oregon, there are happenings going on throughout 2026 to celebrate. Oregon Humanities (an independent non-profit, committed to bringing people together across differences of background, experience and belief) has been gearing up for these celebrations for months now and has graciously offered grants to communities wanting to celebrate the occasion.

One of these 11 grants was awarded to a library here in Umatilla County, the Echo Public Library. Echo has a new library director as of the start of 2026. While not new to the library (she has been at the Echo library since 2019), Anna Lemmon is new to the official title of Library Director. She is not new to running the library, nor to chasing (and catching) grant money to help fund programs and book purchases for her library. Her new title allows her even more flexibility to make decisions to benefit the people of her community. The idea behind the "Beyond 250" grants is to get people around Oregon talking about what has gotten America to where we are in the first 250 years, and what we would like to see America grow into in the next 250 years.

In Echo Anna plans to use the grant money to host a free community dinner that will include a facilitated discussion on the topic of America, where we've been and where we are going. The dinner is planned for April 30, upstairs in Echo's historic City Hall building (where the library is also located). The



goal: get the people of Echo talking about what America means and how to help America continue to grow in the future. While this is the main event of the Beyond 250 project in Echo, Anna also plans to hold an Open House in conjunction with the Echo historical museum to give people a chance to learn more about Echo's history. She also plans to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade (held in sister town Stanfield) to celebrate the actual day of America's 250<sup>th</sup>.

One final project Anna is planning is having the kids who frequent the library help plant the city planters that line the historic main street of town. This will

serve to “plant seeds” of caring for their community, promote understanding of the history of Echo and its wider place in American history, and cleverly fits this year’s summer reading theme of “Plant a Seed, Read.”

The Beyond 250 grant is only one of several grants Anna has procured this year. She also locked in the teen internship grant through the Oregon State Library and will be using that money to fund one teen job this summer. Applications are open to juniors and seniors in high school. The chosen applicant will have the opportunity to experience library work up close, help Anna with the summer reading program and plan a project of their own, intended to serve the Echo library in some way. Echo is not the only library in Umatilla County to receive this grant. Over the years the grant has benefited many teens with a first job for a resume, a way to serve their community, and the possibility of a new career down the road.

The Echo library plans to celebrate America’s semiquincentennial in style alongside many other events planned around our state and nation. The Echo library is doing so while exercising one of the great things about America; offering a free place where all are welcome, all can learn and try new things, and make the place they live better for all. Check out the Echo Public Library, and all the libraries in Umatilla County at [www.ucslid.org](http://www.ucslid.org).

*[Oregon Humanities contributed photo]*