

Libraries Provide — from east to west

By Heather Estrada

For Go! Magazine

Umatilla County spans 3,231 square miles and every inch is covered by exceptional library service. From Milton-Freewater to Umatilla, our libraries provide services, programs and smiles to enhance your life.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Library Director Lili Schmidt has been guiding the Milton-Freewater library for 3½ years, although she's been a fixture there for 20 years. She began her library career in college as a government documents librarian and when she returned home, she jumped right into library work. She's been the reference librarian, the cataloger, the children's librarian and, since 2019, the director.

She discovered early that she loves working with people and is always surprised and gratified by the gratefulness from her community. She loves that the library is truly more like a community center — a place where people can hang out and all are welcome. She said her vision is that “we would continue to be a space for all members of the community. A place that is welcoming to everyone and that we would continue to be loved.”

If you have the good fortune to meet Lili, you can't help but feel loved. Her laugh and personality are like sunshine on a cloudy day. And if running into her isn't reason enough to visit the library, the services they offer are compelling — and everything is free.

One special event coming up is the

Rural Fire Department will visit the library for storytime and a craft on Aug. 2, 5:30 p.m.

UMATILLA

You'll find another ray of sunshine with Umatilla Public Library Director Susie Sotelo. While she hasn't been in libraries as long as Lili, her passion and energy are equally on display. Susie has been the director since 2021, and she was the children's services librarian before stepping into the director role.

Her dad encouraged her to apply for her first library job when she moved to Umatilla in 2017 knowing how much she's always loved reading. She fell in love with the library right away. Susie shares that her biggest surprise and joy working in the Umatilla library has been how all the libraries, and library workers, are so supportive and encouraging.

Susie beautifully embodies this herself. Her dream is that the library would be as diverse as the community itself. She wants everyone in Umatilla to know that the library is for them and strives to create programs and services that are a reflection of the community — half of her staff speaks Spanish so it's likely a patron can come in and find someone to talk to regardless of their preferred language.

Another example is the Mother's Support Group, Conexión de Madre. The group meets the last Thursday of each month and is a place for new moms to come together for support and sharing. This month they meet on July 27 to hear about the 211 community hotline and also make cannoli. A final example of Susie's desire to serve her community

is Umatilla's Library of Things. If this is a new term to you, check out your local library — most have one with items to check out that aren't books. In Umatilla you can check out a cross stitch kit, 3-D pens, art sets, a candle making set and internet hot spots. Across Umatilla County, from the east to the west, library directors and their staff are working hard to meet your needs, and to spark new ideas and joy, for each member of their community.

Summer is the ideal time to get out and visit your local library and, with the Reading Road Trip, it's a great time to visit a library that's not near your home.

Milton-Freewater and Umatilla are part of the Umatilla County Special Library District. Find more information at www.ucslid.org.



Susie Sotelo



Lili Schmidt