

# Do we need libraries? Yes!

By Heather Estrada

For Go! Eastern Oregon

Why do our tax dollars fund libraries in 2025? Do we even need a library with phones in our pockets?

The answer is a resounding YES!

The Pendleton Public Library reveals numerous reasons we all need libraries.

First, the obvious — you can check out books, DVDs, magazines, snowshoes, American girls dolls, etc., all for free.

When looking for a book at the Pendleton library, you are searching the catalog of 76 other libraries across Eastern Oregon. If you find a book at another library, it will be delivered to your library for free.

Second, and this is an important one, community! And it starts at the top with Director Jennifer Johnson and Assistant Director James Simpson. Jennifer and James

work marvelously with one another to plan and execute an astonishing number of programs for community members of all ages.

They can't say enough about the work of the other — James appreciates Jennifer's amazing ability to generate good ideas and implement them, and Jennifer appreciates James's perspective and ability to balance her work with, and for, the public. Their collaboration produces seven book clubs — for grade school students (Minecraft book club, first grade character club, kinder readers, I Survived book club, Goosebumps book club), and for adults (Indigenous author book club and the Reese Witherspoon Book Club).

Their collaboration and encouragement leads to a myriad of community connections. They partner with Pendleton Parks and Recreation for scuba presentations, teen nights at the rec center, and



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**James Simpson, assistant director at the Pendleton Public Library, demonstrates using cross-country skis that are available to check out from the Library of Things.**

afterschool and summer parks programs.

The sheriff's department will do a drone licensing program in the library on March 4, and the library is partnering with Altrusa in March for a Read Across America event with treats and free books to give away.

All these events are free and provide a space for community members to gather,

connect and learn something new. This leads to a third benefit of libraries...

They provide education! The above events give people of all ages the opportunity to learn, as do programs such as the Hogwarts Academy — currently offered at the library and organized by Jennifer Colton-Jones, the adult program coordinator.

While obviously based on a book series (Harry Potter) the program has included a field trip to Blue Mountain Wildlife to learn about owls and other birds of prey. In March, the library will partner with StirrUp Hope Therapeutic Riding to learn about the anatomy of horses. In April, the Umatilla County Master Gardeners will give a "herbology" class.

Another staff member leads a "knitting in the library" group and offers special projects to patrons, such as making a pillow and paper quilling.

This list is the tip of the iceberg of the programs, activities, community-building opportunities and fun to be had at the Pendleton library (did I mention in February they had roller skating INSIDE the library?). Libraries are a vital part of an active, engaged, community-oriented, caring city. Jennifer, James and their staff are leaders in making Pendleton a vibrant place to live.

The libraries in Umatilla County also provide materials, community building, education and a safe place to belong. For more information, visit [www.ucslid.org](http://www.ucslid.org) and follow your closest library on Facebook.