

Success Stories

Bradley Beach Public Library Helps Patrons Gain More Independence and Comfort with Using Technology

Bradley Beach Public Library knows how important it is to have specialized resources and staff members to encourage digital literacy. Pre-pandemic, they offered a one-on-one technology program that was very successful but unfortunately was paused during Covid-19 shutdowns. That's why when they heard about the **NJSL + Partners Digital Literacy Hub & Spoke Library program**, they were immediately interested in applying. They saw this opportunity as a way to expand on this one-on-one technology work with clients.

Bradley Beach was named a Spoke Library with Red Bank Public Library as their Hub. Once their grant was received, they got the post out there to hire an individual who had a strong comfort level with technology and they found Diana Gowen. Diana had a technological professional background working for Intel, as well as a finger on the pulse of the local workforce development community. By staying current on the activities and resources available in the workforce space, Diana was able to hit the ground running and build the strong client base that she now regularly works with at Bradley Beach Public Library.



Diana Gowen and George Foerst in the
Bradley Beach Public Library computer lab.

"After five weeks of being mentored in the North Star program, I've a better understanding of computer language, landscape, techniques etc. I like how the lessons are set up in progressive steps followed by review questions, making for smooth learning. Although the program has its quirks, all in all I highly recommend it for anyone wanting to learn or improve their computer skills. **I'm a grateful student who went from being intimidated to having a new friend in my computer!**"

— *George Foerst*

The library already had 10 public computers, but thanks to the grant money, they were able to add one more. This computer sits on a mobile desk, so that it can be used exclusively for digital literacy work in any area of the library. A surprising lesson the Bradley Beach staff has learned is that many clients choose to use their own devices and lean on Diana's expertise to get them comfortable with their personal device. This eliminates confusion that can sometimes occur when you learn on one device and then go home and your device doesn't look exactly the same.



BRADLEY BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Regardless of which device they use, it's clear that this digital literacy program is giving people more independence. Through their individual sessions with Diana, patrons are able to receive the personalized assistance they need to learn technology, therefore no longer having to rely on others to explain it to them. Many have shared that this is incredibly beneficial in making each client more comfortable in a tech-heavy world. The staff at Bradley Beach is grateful for the infrastructure of this program that allows small libraries like theirs to offer these additional resources and serve this intense individual need for learning. Should patrons need further training, their Hub Library is close by in Red Bank and they can easily get there by car or public transportation.

As of right now, Bradley Beach Public Library is serving 6 clients on a regular basis and their needs vary from some who simply want to learn how to organize their files, to others who are learning how to use a new laptop. The demographic of clients seeking technology assistance was mostly seniors prior to Covid, but now that this program incorporates the job component, they anticipate serving a younger adult audience. The program is another option for jobseekers outside of the traditional workforce development organizations. Unlike some other organizations, libraries are accessible to all, viewed as a safe space in communities. This program provides a way for library staff to provide more personalized, one-on-one assistance to patrons than they normally are able to on a day-to-day basis. The staff at Bradley Beach are proud to have someone on the team who is dedicated and focused on this important work and empowering patrons through digital literacy.



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