

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prince William Public Libraries to Go Fine-Free Beginning July 1

(WOODBIDGE, VA – April 28, 2021): Prince William Public Libraries (PWPL) will no longer charge fines for late items beginning Thursday, July 1, 2021. PWPL recognizes, based on data and statistics throughout the country as well as through stories from the community, that removing late fees will have a positive impact on those who enjoy PWPL services, resources, and materials.

In recent years, PWPL has increased its focus on removing barriers to better serve the community. Fines typically most affect those with limited resources and deter them from checking materials out from the libraries.

“By removing overdue fines, other libraries throughout the country have noticed that patrons are returning their overdue items at an increased rate and more patrons are re-engaging with their libraries,” remarks Deborah Wright, PWPL director.

PWPL continues to make strides in addressing its strategic goals outlined in its 2019 – 2021 Strategic Plan. Removing fines directly addresses its commitment to removing barriers to access to both print and digital materials. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PWPL suspended fines from March – November 2020. After looking at data, leadership chose not to re-implement fines for children and teens after November 2020 as the benefits far outweighed the small amount of revenue received from late fees.

“Our vision of being the hub connecting people to the transforming power of information is becoming a reality by taking steps like removing fines, offering mobile Wi-Fi hotspots for patrons to have internet access in their homes, and increasing both our physical and online collections,” continues Wright. “We want to continue to be a welcoming, inclusive environment and we can only do so by making changes that better our patrons’ experiences.”

PWPL joins more than 280 library systems across the country that have gone completely fine-free. According to the Urban Libraries Council and American Library Association, data and experiences from other libraries has proven that removing late fees removes unfair economic barriers to library access for youth and patrons from disadvantaged backgrounds. A common, related driver is increasing engagement with the library and inviting users back who had been shut out because of fines.

Patrons will still be responsible for paying for lost or damaged items, but all fines and fees will be removed from their account after they return past-due items at any of PWPL’s 12 libraries beginning July 1.

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Prince William Public Libraries consists of 12 branches throughout Prince William County and the City of Manassas, providing free access to books, e-books, e-audio, print and digital magazines, Digital Library, and CDs/DVDs. PWPL also offers free educational and entertaining programs for all ages.

MEDIA CONTACT: Rachel Johnson, Communication Services Division Chief

Email: rjohnson@pwcgov.org

Phone: 571-298-7249