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## Library Keeps Students Connected During Unconventional Summer

by Erin Pant

As the school year wended down in June, Saint Peter's librarian Mrs. Virginia Riley recognized that this was going to be a very different summer for everyone. Riley wanted to provide some normalcy for her students, so she came up with a way to safely keep the library open during the summer with virtual reading groups and curbside book checkouts.

"With so many normal summer activities for children cancelled or postponed, I felt that it might be good to provide a familiar face and some consistency for my students," said Riley.

Riley hosted six weekly, grade-based summer reading groups. The sessions were voluntary, and students could attend whenever their schedule permitted.

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students enjoyed themed sessions that explored different types of career. They listened to a story about a specific profession and got to virtually meet a special guest working in that field. Guests included a builder, a fitness/nutrition expert, a pediatric nurse, a seminarian and Saint Peter's own Vice Principal Mr. Nelson Abreu.

First graders focused on the creative writing process. They created a book called "What Do Students Do?" based on the series titled "Jobs in My School." Second graders read "Charlotte's Web" and learned about barnyard animals and county fairs. Third and fourth graders enjoyed the humorous series "Wayside School" and fifth graders read a graphic novel about the Trojan War and learned about various Greek gods and goddesses, even creating business cards for them.

"I really enjoy seeing my students through the virtual groups, of course I'd prefer to see them in person!" said Riley. "They have much to share when we meet, we have met each other's pets, siblings, etc. I feel that the online classes have provided a little social interaction in a time when it's been very tough for us to be together."

Riley also developed a safe way to keep the school library available to students all summer long. Students could reserve books through the online library catalog and then twice a week the books were available to pick up or return through a no contact system.

"Libraries are meant to be used, books are meant to be read and enjoyed," said Riley. "With our leisure time options limited by the pandemic, it's nice to know you can look forward to a new book or revisit a much-loved book," said Riley.



Saint Peter's parents were extremely appreciative of Mrs. Riley's efforts. Laura Pachucki said, "My daughter Genevieve greatly enjoyed checking out books from the library and story time with Mrs. Riley during the summer. As we switched to online learning in March, Mrs. Riley went above and beyond to keep the classes connected by offering this program."

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