

East Brunswick Public Library eliminates overdue fines for children, teens

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(Photo: ~Courtesy of East Brunswick Public Library)

EAST BRUNSWICK - The East Brunswick Public Library has eliminated overdue fines on items for children's and teens.

It is the first library to do this in the Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium and only among a handful of libraries in the state to take this action.

“The East Brunswick Public Library Foundation is constantly looking for new ways to support our library,” Tracy L. Fink, foundation board president, said in a statement. “Sponsoring a unique program like this is a great way to give back to the library and to give the children in our community the gift of literacy.”

The goal of the program, initiated by the East Brunswick Public Library Foundation, is to increase library usage in families by removing the fines, allowing children and families to have more access to library materials, the statement said.

According to Fink, the pilot program runs through the rest of 2018.

Although overdue fines will not be charged, fees for lost and damaged items remain, the statement said. Overdue notices will still be sent as reminders to return items. Items not

returned within 21 days of the due date are considered lost, and the full cost of the item will be charged to the library customer's account.

"There are a few public libraries that have been experimenting with eliminating library fines," East Brunswick Public Library Director Jennifer Podolsky said in the statement. "Studies have shown that libraries have a positive impact on child development. Anything that we can do to increase accessibility to the library for families is important, as removing barriers to access is a key component of our strategic plan."

"By sponsoring this program, the East Brunswick Public Library Foundation has really done something that will impact many families in town," Fink said. "We're happy that this announcement coincides with National Library Week (April 8-14)."

The East Brunswick Public Library joins Camden County Library in not collecting fines for children's and teen items. East Brunswick is the only library in the Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium to do this for its cardholders, the statement said.

Other library systems and libraries around Central Jersey are considering a similar action.

"It is a concept we are following and exploring," said Brian Auger, library administrator with the Somerset County Library System of New Jersey, which includes 10 libraries in the county. "The policy would have to be made by the library commission."

Tina Marie Doody, assistant director of the Plainfield Public Library, said while it is not currently offered at the library, "it is something we are actively investigating for the future."

"There has been some research about the fact that fines and fees create barriers to library access, especially for low income families," she added.

Established in 2009, the East Brunswick Public Foundation works to mobilizes private support to enhance innovative programs and services, while helping the library remain vibrant and responsive in an ever-changing world, the statement said.

Most recently, the foundation sponsored a library visit with bestselling children's author and "Arthur" creator Marc Brown. Information about supporting or joining the East Brunswick Public Library Foundation can be found at www.ebplfoundation.org.

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