

Skaneateles Library Goes Fine-Free for Kids and Teens

SKANEATELES – If your family checks out children’s, middle reader or young adult books at the Skaneateles Library, your life is about to get a little easier. As of June 25, the library is no longer charging overdue fines on any materials in the children’s, middle reader and young adult collections, including Early Literacy Kits, Discovery Backpacks and DVDs in the Family section.

The new policy was approved by unanimous vote at the June 12th meeting of the library board. The library has also forgiven all current fines for these items that had already accrued for Skaneateles Library cardholders. Because of the costs of buying and processing new materials, borrowers who lose or damage these items will still be charged for the replacement costs. However, there will be no fines at all if the items are returned to the library in good condition.

The reason for the change is to make it easier for kids and teens to connect with books. “Overdue fines can be a serious barrier for kids, even a relatively small amount,” said library director Nickie Marquis. “They’re embarrassed or upset by it, worried they’re going to get in trouble and don’t feel comfortable coming back. That’s the absolute last thing we want.”

Library staff were also concerned that the threat of fines was influencing parents to limit the number of books their children can take home. “Young kids tend to check out more books than their parents,” explained Marquis. “A child might take ten picture books compared to the one or two books an adult would borrow. Then add on books for each sibling, and overdue fines can quickly become a concern for families.”

Librarian for Kids and Teens Mary Beth Schwartzwalder is excited about the policy change. “There are lots of reasons why a family may not be able to return materials on time. Schedules change, people are already juggling so much. We don’t want these everyday occurrences to keep kids from accessing books.” With those fines lifted, she expects to see more families checking out greater numbers of books for their children.

Schwartzwalder is also optimistic about the impact on teens. “Older kids and teens have more choices and independence when checking out books, but they still may not have control over exactly when they can visit the library to return them,” Schwartzwalder said. “We want as many young people as possible reading and learning, so we’re trying to remove any obstacles that might be in the way of them having full access to the library.”

For more information contact library director Nickie Marquis at 315-685-5135 or nmarquis@skaneateleslibrary.org.