

MPL librarians demonstrate their kindheartedness to local residents

advocateneews.net/malden/news/mpl-librarians-demonstrate-their-kindheartedness-to-local-residents

Jim Mitchell

May 21, 2026



Librarians at the Malden Public Library (MPL) can help you find information about a million different subjects, but they also do much more. Because MPL is a focal point for community gathering, the leadership and staff want to be a resource for individuals and families who need help navigating systems for healthcare and housing services. Recently, Assistant Library Director Marita Coombs coordinated with Mass General Brigham to bring one of the hospital's mobile medical Community Care Vans to Malden.

"We're collaborating with Mass General Brigham to provide mobile medical services to the Library. We're hoping it will be a regular monthly visit, where free care is provided to everyone regardless of whether they have health insurance," Coombs explained.

On April 30, the van parked at MPL, rolled out its rain/sun awning and opened its door for business. The care team, which includes a community health worker, a nurse practitioner and a medical assistant, provided screenings to help control chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. They also consulted with patients to

determine if they need access to a primary care doctor or at-home medical equipment like blood pressure machines and glucose monitors.

“Bringing health services into community spaces like the Malden Public Library helps remove barriers and meet people where they are. Libraries are trusted hubs, and through our Community Care Vans, we reach individuals in familiar, welcoming settings with accessible healthcare, education and support,” said Dr. Priya Sarin Gupta, who is Senior Medical Director of the Mass General Brigham Clinical-Community Programs. “This community-based approach is key to advancing health outcomes and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access care and improve their long-term health.”

Malden’s poverty rate is estimated at more than 11 percent, and the city has its share of unhoused people. MPL’s first-floor meeting rooms are a hub of activity where patrons can meet with community agencies for assistance with housing, healthcare, food access, mental health services and other social services. MPL collaborates with Malden’s Office of Housing Stability, Mystic Valley Elder Services, Malden’s Health and Human Services Coordinator, the Language Access Coordinator, Addiction Recovery Resource Specialists and Malden Community Electricity.

After Malden residents expressed frustration about receiving high utility bills, MPL librarians organized a bill-paying workshop, which more than 45 people attended. They met representatives from various local agencies, who explained how to secure discounted utility rates, more affordable plans and financial assistance. Because of the obvious community interest, MPL is planning to hold similar events in the future.

Another popular support program helps people learn basic tech literacy skills. The librarians hold regular tech literacy workshops at MPL, offering education and encouragement. Librarians regularly teach patrons how to go online to register their children for school, pay bills, apply for jobs and contact local support agencies. And many patrons come to MPL to access free, reliable Wi-Fi and help finding information on the Internet.

“The librarians understand they are a valuable community resource, and we are so proud of how they go above and beyond for our patrons,” said MPL Director Dora St. Martin. “The act of offering essential services and resources for the community is central to the Library’s core mission.”

For more information about the Library, visit <https://maldenpubliclibrary.org>.