

Agenda Packet:

5/23/23

Fine Forgiveness Month

Definition:

A set time period in which patrons with late fines may contact the library (in person, via email, or over the phone) to request that their late fines are cancelled.

Rationale:

Late fees prevent a person (or their household) from checking out items. Hosting an annual Fine Forgiveness Month helps patrons who are struggling financially and who are unable to utilize the library.

Current Fine Policy:

- Books accrue a late fee at the rate of 10 cents per day per item.
- DVDs & Books on CD accrue a late fee at the rate of \$1 per day per item with a maximum fee of \$10.
- Once an item is 60 days late, the item is automatically billed as lost (cost of the item plus a \$10 processing fee) and the late fine is removed.
- Members of the same household are linked together. If one member of the household has a fine, no one in the household can check out items until the fine is paid.

Currently Circulation Policy:

- All items have a check-out period of 2 weeks.
- An item may be renewed up to two times as long as no other patron has placed a reserve on the item.
- Based on patron preferences, the Library sends out a **pre-overdue notice** (3 day warning for those who have selected text or email notifications), a **7 day overdue notice** (phone call or an email/text message), a **14 day overdue notice** (phone call from staff plus a text or email notification), a **21 day overdue notice** (phone call from staff plus a text or email notification) and a **30 day overdue notice** (mailed postcard to the address on file).

Fine Forgiveness Requirements:

- This only applies to late fines, not to damage or lost item fines.
- The item must have already been returned to the library before the fines can be cancelled.

- The patron must request the fine cancellation during the set time period of fine forgiveness month. The fines may have been accrued at any time.

Data:

- Our last Fine Forgiveness Month in August 2022 resulted in the cancellation of \$980.80 in fines.
- 207 patrons requested and received fine forgiveness. The fines ranged in price from 10 cents to \$19.70.
- As of May 18, 2023, 7888 library patrons have a fine with a total of 64,333.80. These range in price from 5 cents to \$97.00. In the past, late fees were 5 cents per day per item.
- Library visits:
 - June 2022: 4894
 - July 2022: 4052
 - August 2022: 2444
 - September 2022: 3956

Sample press release from previous Fine Forgiveness month

The Huntsville Public Library is pleased to announce Fine Forgiveness Month. During August 2022, patrons who have accrued late fines on their accounts may request that the Library waive these fees. Charges for items that have been lost, damaged, or returned more than 60 days late do not qualify for this forgiveness program. The only two requirements are that the patron must contact the Library, whether by phone, email, or in person, during the month of August 2022 to request the fine cancellation and the items on which fines have accrued must already be returned to the library at the time of the request. For more information, please contact the Library at 936-291-5472.