During this unprecedented year, Rapid City Public Library evolved to provide the community safe access to materials, education, events and services. The drive-thru was an invaluable resource, serving over 22,000 library users. Not only could the public pick up materials but they could sign up for library cards and receive prints they sent from home computers or their phones. Virtual library services were offered via phone, Zoom, text and email. During the summer and fall, a pop-up mobile library offered materials to checkout, librarian assistance and Wi-Fi throughout the community.

With education impacted by the pandemic, Early Literacy was even more of a priority. Virtual educational events were developed to help meet this community need. Story times were offered on Facebook and YouTube, as well as through Dial-a-Story. These were accessed over 9,000 times during the pandemic alone (March – December), exceeding 2019’s in-person story time attendance by 56%.

Another new early literacy initiative launched was 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, designed to support our community’s early literacy, school readiness, and child-caregiver bond. Custom Black Hills-themed wall charts were designed to track progress and are offered in English and Lakota.

Education and upskilling for adults were also a priority. Access to online classes to build career and technology skills as well as arts, language and music were in demand with nearly 3,000 online classes and tutorials accessed.