



OCEAN COUNTY LIBRARY

Connecting People ... Building Community...Transforming Lives

PRESS RELEASE

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Farewell to Fines: Ocean County Library Eliminates Daily Overdue Fines

TOMS RIVER – The Ocean County Library has become fine-free as of July 1, by action taken at the Ocean County Library Commission’s June 15 meeting.

The Library's mission is to connect people, build community, and transform lives. Eliminating overdue fines will further that mission by removing barriers to the Library's resources.

“Going fine-free provides wider access and enjoyment of the Library’s resources,” said Ocean County Commissioner Joseph Vicari, the Library liaison. “We encourage everyone to come and enjoy the use of our Libraries.”

“The Ocean County Library system suspended late fines when the Coronavirus pandemic forced its closure in March 2020,” said Library Assistant Director Sara Siegler. “After the July 2020 reopening, nearly all materials were returned.”

A review of statistics spanning the past several years revealed that the average rate of return of materials is 99.79%.

In 2019, the American Library Association passed a resolution that asserted overdue fines are a barrier to equitable access and encouraged libraries to eliminate them. Ocean County Library joins many libraries across the country in becoming a fine-free Library.

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“Our Ocean County residents are very responsible about taking care of their Library books and materials and returning them,” remarked Library Director Susan Quinn. “As a result, the Ocean County Library Commission decided to make the suspension of late fines permanent.”

Ocean County Library Commission Chair Ruthanne Scaturro remarked, “Nothing is more important to the Library than maintaining a healthy relationship with patrons. Saying ‘farewell to fines’ is another step in the right direction.”

“It will make using our services more convenient for our patrons who lead busy lives, and for those living with limited resources,” added Library Commission Vice Chair Christopher Mullins.

Items can be returned to any of the Library’s 21 Branches. Book drops at every branch are in operation 24 hours a day.

The Library will still apply due dates for the books and materials, and will continue to send reminders when the items are due back.

Patrons are given a seven-day grace period to return overdue items before borrowing privileges will be suspended or until the cost of replacement has been paid.

While most Ocean County Library materials will no longer have overdue fines, there are a few exceptions, such as equipment and for materials that are owned by other libraries and borrowed through Interlibrary Loan.

To learn more, browse the catalog, obtain a Library card, register for events, and more, visit www.theoceancountylibrary.org.

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