The Mohawk Valley Library System (MVLS) is a cooperative public library system serving 14 independent public libraries in Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady and Schoharie counties in upstate New York. Public libraries provide an important resource for their communities by supplementing education through library activities and learning opportunities.

MVLS's “Science @ the Library” began in 1992 as ‘Science in the Summer” with a three-fold purpose:

1. to bring science education to grade school children and their families outside the confines of the regular classroom.
2. to offer accessible science programming to students and adults in rural areas that otherwise would be unable to provide for these services.
3. to give children an opportunity to meet and collaborate with real scientists, generating positive science experiences and planting the seeds for careers in science.

From planting seeds for careers in science, to providing developmental opportunities that encourage youth to thrive, to enriching lives that span more than four generations, Science @ the Library inspires and creates positive experiences for young and young-at-heart alike.

Teen volunteer Anna Winters says, "This program allowed me to experience the pleasure of watching children’s faces light up with wonder and joy at the seemingly magic experiments they completed and the way they filled with pride when they realized they were learning how these experiments worked."

The glue throughout has been these GE Volunteers, who model agelessness, empathy and a boundless enthusiasm for learning and teaching. “I continue to participate as a facilitator at age 94 because it’s fun for me to see the reaction of the kids as they have ‘Aha Moments’,” said Rudy Dehn, a volunteer from Day 1.

From taking educator training at miSci, (formerly the Schenectady Museum), to gleefully playing with experiments they completed and the way they filled with pride when they realized they were learning how these experiments worked. The program has evolved from “talking at” to “doing with,” as we recognized early on from the “glazed look on the children’s faces” that children learn best through play and interaction, not words, especially since many GE Scientists tended to lecture, which is not the best way to engage children.

Volunteers donate about 400 hours for Science @ the Library programs and 200 hours for demonstrations at school and libraries throughout the school year.

Equipment, science books and materials, which have been funded through GE Volunteers grants, are used year-round by GE volunteers for library and school programs, enabling volunteers to maintain their far-reaching ability to promote science through the libraries and in cooperation with the schools.

Parents told us they wanted to be involved and experience what their children were doing, and we realized that in rural environments, where children have fewer opportunities, the conversations that happened after the kids went home were as important as the activities themselves.

Science is of interest to patrons of all ages; it brings new audiences and interactions into our libraries. This is evidenced by parental feedback: one offered thanks for "helping my children realize that science is more than a boring subject they have to sit through in class."

We are currently facing the challenge of recruiting new volunteers as current retirees are not longer able to participate because of their advancing age and mobility concerns.

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