

# More love at the library

The Bethlehem Gadfly Fun Stuff, Gadfly's posts, Local Color, Northside 2027, Serious Issues December 20, 2018

*(5th in a series of posts on Northside 2027)*

*Jacqueline Palochko, "Ornaments made from books to help Bethlehem students." Morning Call, November 21, 2018.*

"Old, tattered books usually end up discarded at the Bethlehem Area Public Library. It's not that the library wants to toss books away, but sometimes it's saddled with the same aged cookbook or numerous copies of a bestseller from a decade ago. But staff and volunteers are putting those books to use by turning pages of used books into tree ornaments. Proceeds from the sale of the ornaments will go toward helping to pay off lunch debt and overdue library fees of Bethlehem area children."

"It's recycling old books and giving them purpose again as ornaments on a tree."

"Last year, the state passed a new law that bans schools from stigmatizing children for having debt. Under the law, schools must give every child a meal, regardless of how much is owed on a child's account. Districts have reported an increase in their debts since the law went into effect. Bethlehem Area saw a 50 percent jump in its debt — the biggest among area districts. [In August, the district reported its debt at \\$154,590.](#) The library understands the debt the district is facing. After library patrons hit a \$10 overdue fee, they can no longer check out books. Many times, it's children who have accumulated debt on their library cards. Library fees add up, too. Children from Thomas Jefferson Elementary in North Bethlehem alone have racked up \$1,500 in overdue fees, Berk said. Berk speculates that many families who are struggling to pay their children's meals are also finding it difficult to pay off library fees."

Gadfly filed this November story because of its reference to CM Reynolds's "beloved" Thomas Jefferson School (along with William Penn). It's one dramatic example of the need for a Northside 2027 plan.

Gadfly kind of forgot about the story till faithful follower “ssider” sent an email reminder that “School lunch is sometimes the only meal children may have, when they live near, at, or below the poverty line” and reminding me of the library fund-raiser.

Bethlehem Area Public Library \*\*\*\*\* Kindness is Magic



Gadfly hustled down to the library and bought several ornaments in fact. As shown here, one is tentatively nestled at the top of a small tree 'neath a picture of Gadfly and his six “boys.”

Gadfly won't say that they were all readers as kids. But they were always surrounded by books. And the eldest has recently confided that he used to sneak out of bed at night and grab one (probably above his maturity classification!) for midnight reading. Now it makes sense that he had one eye as well as one arm of his glasses going east and one north as I roused him out of bed. Six boys, one shower. They were supposed to go chronologically, oldest first. He could never make it first. Now I have a better idea why. Lunches and books — kids need 'em.