

# Mobile libraries make the homeless feel like they are not alone

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Denecia and her daughter Elianna browse the rows of books in the Queens Library's bookmobile on October 28, 2019. The library system's mobile library tour this year has helped bring services to a number of the borough's homeless shelters that serve mostly single moms and their children. Photo by: Harry Bruinius/The Christian Science Monitor

Denecia and her daughter Elianna smiled as they went through rows of books. Elianna is 9 years old. They were in a special branch of the Queens Library in New York City. Queens is an area in New York City. Queens is one of the most diverse places on the planet.

Local libraries have always been special to Denecia. Growing up, they were an escape from life. She would read to learn about things she did not know. She would also read to understand the world around her.

She likes to bring her two children to libraries around New York City. Some of them are big and fancy. She said she wants them to think libraries are amazing.

This time, the Queens mobile library came to her. It parked outside of a family shelter. She lives at the family shelter. There are 254 other families that also live there. Shelters give housing to people. Specifically, people who do not have a home of their own.

The mobile library started in 2016. It has books, videos and free Internet. It has served almost 1,400 people in family shelters. The shelters are in Queens.

"For the families here, this is just something that makes us feel like we belong, or like we're just not alone," Denecia said.

*(Only first names are used in this story to protect families.)*

### **Focus On Outreach**

Public libraries often help people without homes. They provide computers, WiFi, classes and a place to work.

Last year, more than 500,000 people across the country did not have a home. More libraries are trying to help homeless people.

Kim McNeil-Capers works for the library in Queens. Part of her job is to connect families to books and reading. That is her favorite part of her job. The bookmobiles bring the library into communities. It means librarians can talk directly to people that live there.

Mobile libraries have gone on tours in past years. This year, the mobile library will focus on homeless families in the city.

### **"You Could Be A Paycheck Away"**

Jessica is the mother of Malik and Kennedy. Malik is 10 years old. Kennedy is 3 years old. Jessica was smiling as she filled out forms. The forms were for getting library cards for her two children.

Kennedy had a huge smile on her face as she looked at books. She pulled out a book of numbers. She showed it to her mom. "I see it, baby," Jessica said to her daughter. "The girl, she sure likes numbers."

Linda Bazerjian works for a group that gives resources to children who are experiencing homelessness. She said that there are a lot of different reasons that could lead to homelessness. Her group tries to create a community at the shelter.

For example, people who work at the shelter help pick up kids after school. They give them a snack at the shelter. Then they give time for homework help. After that, they have time for learning. The shelter also has sports teams for kids.

These activities are important for the children. They are also helpful to the parents. The parents are often very busy taking care of things such as trying to find housing or going on job interviews.

Denecia and Elianna took out a few books from the mobile library. Jessica got two new library cards for Kennedy and Malik. That day, 80 residents visited the bookmobile.

Jessica said she and her kids are doing better. She is working to become a security officer. The shelter is helping her with this. Jessica is learning from security officers there.

"Malik's crazy about the sports, and he's an all-American here," she said with a laugh. "That's what I really like about it. They make it all about the kids, and help you get back on your feet."

## Quiz

- 1 Which event happened FIRST in the article?
- (A) Denecia visited local libraries growing up.
  - (B) Denecia and her children went to live at the family shelter.
  - (C) Denecia experienced the Queens mobile library.
  - (D) Denecia and her children became homeless.
- 2 WHY does Kim McNeil-Capers enjoy her job?
- (A) She likes helping people find new jobs.
  - (B) She likes bringing books to families in the community.
  - (C) She likes taking care of children while parents work.
  - (D) She likes helping people find housing.
- 3 Which sentence from the article shows how many people are homeless in the United States?
- (A) There are 254 other families that also live there.
  - (B) It has served almost 1,400 people in family shelters.
  - (C) Last year, more than 500,000 people across the country did not have a home.
  - (D) That day, 80 residents visited the bookmobile.
- 4 Read the section "You Could Be A Paycheck Away."
- Select the paragraph that explains HOW the shelter is helping Jessica train for a new job.
- (A) Jessica is the mother of Malik and Kennedy. Malik is 10 years old. Kennedy is 3 years old. Jessica was smiling as she filled out forms. The forms were for getting library cards for her two children.
  - (B) Kennedy had a huge smile on her face as she looked at books. She pulled out a book of numbers. She showed it to her mom. "I see it, baby," Jessica said to her daughter. "The girl, she sure likes numbers."
  - (C) Denecia and Elianna took out a few books from the mobile library. Jessica got two new library cards for Kennedy and Malik. That day, 80 residents visited the bookmobile.
  - (D) Jessica said she and her kids are doing better. She is working to become a security officer. The shelter is helping her with this. Jessica is learning from security officers there.