**Galesburg-Charleston Memorial District Library Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Galesburg-Charleston Library to Eliminate Late Fines**

GALESBURG, Michigan — Late fines will soon be a thing of the past at Galesburg-Charleston Memorial District Library. Beginning January 1, 2020, the library will stop charging fines for overdue materials.

Fine-free libraries are not new. For the last 10–15 years, libraries across the country have eliminated fines and reported an increase in library usage overall. Studies from libraries around the country have shown that library fines are not effective as a mechanism to encourage timely return of materials, and instead serve as an economic barrier.

According to the US Census Bureau, 29% of all households in the City of Galesburg live below the poverty line. For families with children under 18, that number is 39% and for families with children under 5 years old the number rises to 65%.

“It’s about access,” said Helena Hayes, library director. “Our current mission states, ‘[t]he Library strives to inform, enrich and equip residents in our community by creating and promoting access to a wealth of ideas and information…’ It is clear that overdue fines can be a barrier to access of library materials by those residents who most often rely on our services.”

There is mounting evidence that overdue fines are not an effective mechanism to encourage the timely return of materials and that eliminating fines increases library usage. In “Economic Barriers to Information Access, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,” ALA states, “All library policies and procedures, particularly those involving fines, fees or other user charges, should be scrutinized for potential barriers to access.”

The change in policy for the library includes eliminating all overdue fines, and forgiving any fines patrons have accrued in the past. Materials will still have due dates, and as always, patrons will be responsible for replacement costs if an item is lost or destroyed.

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