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Viking Library System's New Bookmobile Hits the Road This Summer

Watch for the new Viking Library System (VLS) bookmobile, coming to a community near you this summer! The new bookmobile hits the road June 1 in west central Minnesota, continuing more than 40 years of service to the region. The bookmobile replaces an older model that proudly served the area for more than 28 years, crisscrossing the six county (Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens and Traverse) service area, accumulating more than 450,000 miles.

The Viking Library System is particularly excited to be able to share the new bookmobile with communities this summer after more than a year of providing modified services to bookmobile patrons. "During the past year, our priority has been on providing safe service during the pandemic, which meant getting books and other library materials to our bookmobile patrons differently," says Erin Smith, VLS Director. "To be able to share this brand new bookmobile, now, this summer is such a special gift! Inviting patrons on board for the first time carries extra special meaning for all of us."

The bookmobile was constructed by LDV Specialty Vehicles, based in Burlington, WI. The new truck includes several features specifically designed for serving VLS patrons, including solar panels that will generate electricity to power the bookmobile's batteries, which in turn will help run the lights, heating and ventilation system, and computers, increasing energy efficiency. Boosted Wi-Fi also means those visiting the bookmobile can use the bookmobile's signal to download Viking Library System eBooks and audiobooks in addition to checking out print materials.

Bookmobile patrons will also notice that the new vehicle looks more like a truck than a school bus. Built on a truck frame, with the cab separate, the bookmobile features air brakes and suspension, and slightly taller ceilings than the old bookmobile.

While all of these features are impressive, perhaps the most noticeable feature are the exterior murals created and painted by local artist Scott Gunvaldson. The murals feature local landscapes with a nod to west central Minnesota's four seasons. Bookmobiles of Viking Library System past are also a part of the artwork, traversing down our region's rural roads.

The mural on the back panel of the truck is designed to represent a view inside of the bookmobile. Drivers following the new bookmobile as it traverses those rural roads will get a sense of peering inside and perusing the stacks. Bookmobile patrons inspired by Scott Gunvaldson's beautiful murals will be able to decorate their own 3D paper bookmobile by picking up a paper template during a visit to the truck this summer.

Patrons stepping onto the truck for the first time will notice the bright and inviting interior, lit by LED lights and natural light. They will also be welcomed by rows of shiny new books, DVDs, magazines, audiobooks and more for all ages. The new bookmobile is also decorated inside with artwork created by youth.

The new Viking Library System bookmobile is made possible through funding provided by:

- Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens and Traverse counties;
- Northern Lights Library Network; and
- The Frank W. Veden Charitable Trust.

To find out when the bookmobile is visiting a community near you, check the bookmobile schedule on the Viking Library System's website: <https://www.viking.lib.mn.us/bookmobile>

The bookmobile makes 50 public stops during the summer months, visiting each community once every two weeks. The bookmobile also serves more than two dozen area senior care centers and assisted living facilities year round, and 15 schools during the school year.

In addition to launching the new bookmobile on June 1st, staff are also kicking off VLS's summer reading program for bookmobile patrons of all ages. It's free to join and earn prizes. You can register for the program now at viking.lib.mn.us/summer-reading or by downloading the free "Beanstack Tracker" app available on both Google Play or the App Store on your phone or tablet and choosing "Viking Library System Bookmobile" as your library.

First organized in 1975, Viking Library System is one of 12 regional public library systems in the state. VLS serves the six west central Minnesota counties of Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens and Traverse with a mission to connect people with the information they need in the format they desire to function successfully in a rapidly changing world.

Eleven area libraries are members of the Viking Library System: Douglas County Library (Alexandria), Browns Valley Public Library, Thorson Memorial Library (Elbow Lake), Fergus Falls Public Library, Glenwood Public Library, Hancock Community Library, Morris Public Library, New York Mills Public Library, Pelican Rapids Public Library, Perham Area Community Library, and Wheaton Community Library.

In addition to providing bookmobile service to rural residents and those who live in communities without a public library, VLS provides:

- high-speed telecommunications network and internet access to member libraries, as well as technical, software and hardware support.
- the online catalog and circulation system used by member libraries and the bookmobile.
- access to online tools, like the new JobNow and HelpNow database, which provide free access to a virtual job coach or tutor for students in grades k-12. And access to e-resources through shared system-wide collections available on Overdrive or the My Libby app.
- inter-library loan and delivery services, which make it possible to get a book from any library in the system delivered to your home library within a few days.
- outreach services to area child cares and group homes.
- Legacy Amendment funded arts, history and cultural programming in conjunction with member libraries.

VLS headquarter offices are located at 1915 W. Fir Avenue in Fergus Falls, MN, and System staff can be reached at 218-739-5286 or via email at info@vikinglibrarysystem.org.