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FIREWORKS, FOUNDING FATHERS FOCUS OF FOURTH FESTIVITIES

FOX CHAPEL, PA – What do our nation's founding fathers, fireworks, families, and Fritz Mitnick have in common? They were at the forefront of Cooper-Siegel Community Library's (CSCL) Fourth of July festivities!

Community members and state and local legislators gathered Friday in the library's Fritz Mitnick Welcome Garden for an evening of music, picnicking, games, and a live reading of the United States' Declaration of Independence, as it was historically written. The evening culminated in a beautiful fireworks display by the neighboring Pittsburgh Field Club, visible from the garden.

CSCL and Sharpsburg Community Library (SCL) Development Manager Nadine Ostrowski said the library has been her choice viewing location for fireworks for many years.

"Each year, more and more people would gather here on the Fourth of July, and I found myself thinking, 'Why not make an event out of it?' It's a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together, and the Fritz Mitnick Welcome Garden – nestled between the library and the Fox Chapel Borough Building – is the perfect spot for viewing," Ostrowski said. "This free event offers our community a simple, heartfelt, powerful way to reflect on the values that connect us all – freedom, civic engagement, and the pursuit of knowledge."

Each year, the library hosts live readings of Washington Irving's *'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'* in October; and Charles Dickens' *'A Christmas Carol'* in December. Looking to expand upon the library's annual offerings, Ostrowski said adding the live reading of the Declaration of Independence by Fox Chapel School District community members and leaders "felt like a natural next step."

"This year, we saw the Fourth of July as a chance to add something new – a live reading that celebrates the spirit of the holiday. This event is an extension of our mission: to foster a community of learners and engaged citizens," she said. "In a time when connection and civic dialogue are more important than ever, this celebration allows us to come together around a shared narrative and celebrate the role libraries play in preserving, sharing and shaping that story."

When the event was announced in June, tickets sold out within days. When additional spots were added, those were full within hours. Ostrowski said she "expected the event to be popular," but the community's response "has been truly overwhelming – in the best way."

"We've actually had to turn people away, which speaks volumes about the hunger for shared experiences right now. In today's climate, I think people are looking for moments of unity – something that reminds us of what we hold in common," she said. "The *Declaration of Independence* represents a bold and courageous stand in the face of uncertainty. It was a leap of faith made during a deeply unsettled time, and it continues to resonate because of what it symbolizes: hope, resolve, and the power of coming together for a greater purpose. This incredible community response reminds us that the spirit of 'united

we stand” is alive and well. It’s a testament to the strength of our community and the importance of creating space for shared reflection and celebration.”

In support of the festivities, Congressman Chris Deluzio (PA-17) donated fifty booklets containing the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution for attendees. Other event freebies included wristbands, glowsticks, bead necklaces, freeze pops and more.

“This July 4th, I’m proud to join all patriotic Americans in celebrating our great nation and its 249th birthday,” Congressman Deluzio said. “Thank you to the Cooper-Siegel Community Library for holding a live reading of the Declaration of Independence – a tradition I love to do with friends and family. Happy Independence Day.”

The inaugural event’s live readers included: Veena Agarwal, Nisreen Al-Bataineh, Lou Curcio, Jr., Finn Gelsimino, Kaylie Glaze, Brian Kern, Kazz Kern, Steve Lackey, Zhexin (Kate) Lin, Nadine Ostrowski, Olivia Payne, Miguel Sague, Jr., Jan Shaw, Naomi Weisberg Siegel, State Sen. Lindsey Williams and Gabriel Yassin. A full list of the readers’ biographies is included with this press release.

Ostrowski said she hopes guests left the event with “a deeper appreciation for both the words and weight” the Declaration of Independence carries.

“Hearing it read aloud – by neighbors, community members and even children – brings the text to life in a powerful, human way. It’s not just a historical document; it’s a radical statement of ideals, crafted during a time of fear, uncertainty and hope,” Ostrowski said. “By experiencing it together in a shared space, I hope listeners reflect on the bravery it took to declare independence and the enduring importance of unity, equity and civic engagement. Most of all, I hope they’re reminded that the principles of liberty and justice still belong to all of us; and that we each have a role in carrying them forward.”

For more information about Cooper-Siegel Community Library, including upcoming programming, visit www.coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org.

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