

COMMENTARY FROM THE COMMUNITY

Rethink your local library — they provide more than books

Alyssa Ruben

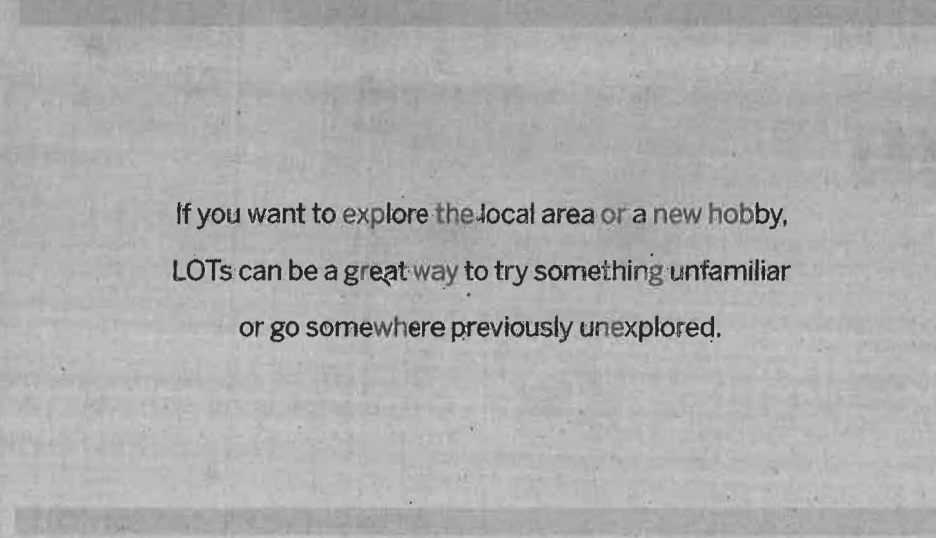
With the weather warming and summer vacations on the horizon, it is time for more outdoor activities and shared experiences using oversized yard games, metal detectors, projectors, sports equipment and specialized kitchen tools.

That list of items may seem like a completely unrelated group of objects, but they are connected because they are all part of the same collections: a Library of Things, or a selection of nonmedia items available to borrow at libraries or through other organizations. Sixteen local libraries maintain LOTS: Akron-Summit, Ashtabula, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Fairport Harbor, Geauga, Hudson, Kent, Madison, Mentor, Perry, Reed, Stow-Monroe, Twinsburg, Warren-Trumbull and Westlake.

Cleveland library patrons can borrow these items and more from their local libraries with a library card. The contents of each LOT collection can be found on the library's website, as well as any rules and the length of time an item can be borrowed.

Not all of the items available are related to outdoor recreation or summer potlucks. Some can be educational, including driving cones for teens with their learner's permit, STEM kits, microscopes, instruments, and memory kits.

Does the forecast call for rain? Puzzles, board games, crafting supplies and other



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hobby items can be borrowed from all libraries with LOTS.

Interested in local culture or educational institutions? Borrow a museum or zoo pass for a fun day out from a subset of public libraries, including Akron-Summit, Reed Memorial, Mentor and Kent.

Have a home improvement project that needs a specific tool? Ashtabula, Barberton and your local library might have the tool you need so you don't have to make an unnecessary purchase for a one-time fix.

Beyond entertainment and tools, LOTS can help improve the health of commu-

nity members via providing radon test kits, blood pressure tests, moisture meters, electricity usage monitors and others within their collections. Ashtabula, Perry, Cuyahoga Falls and other libraries lend these test kits to people in Northeast Ohio.

Each library has its own collection, and not all of the LOTS have each type of item.

If you want to explore the local area or a new hobby, LOTS can be a great way to try something unfamiliar or go somewhere previously unexplored.

In addition, if you are no longer interested in an old hobby and still have the

materials, or have items to get rid of after a bout of spring cleaning, you can donate them to a LOT. Make sure to confirm with the library if they are accepting items, and if not, the item can always be gifted through another community group. Donating an item that is still in good shape and usable, rather than throwing it away, allows the object to have a second life and prevents someone else from buying the item new, minimizing environmental impact.

LOTS give people the opportunity to try something out before buying it for themselves, remembering to take good care of it so it can be shared by other people afterwards. Increasing awareness about LOTS can allow them to flourish and become more popular, so they can continue to provide entertainment, learning opportunities and potential health benefits.

Let's open our minds to new ways to connect with the community and utilize our wonderful local institutions with incredibly helpful staff for more than books, media, and research, even though those are important features, as well. Libraries are an incredible resource beyond literature.

Ruben, who writes from Cleveland Heights, is a lifelong resident of Northeast Ohio pursuing a master's degree in biology whose project work focuses on resource use and waste reduction. She is also a lover of libraries.