

San Mateo County, CA – July 1, 2016 – As many libraries are undergoing a renaissance in new technology, STEM related programming, and maker-related user experiences the act of checking out a book and other library materials has remained relatively unchanged, including overdue fines for materials that are returned late. To improve that experience for youth and families in San Mateo County, the Peninsula Library System announced that daily late fees for materials checked out to children and teens will be eliminated effective July 1.

“Peninsula libraries offer an incredible array of collections, services, and events designed to help children and teens experience the joy of reading, build a love of learning, and succeed in school. Owing fines is a barrier to accessing these wonderful library activities, especially for families with limited financial resources,” said Derek Wolfgram, Peninsula Library System Administrative Council Chair and Redwood City Public Library Director. “We want to make sure every child and teenager in San Mateo County has every opportunity to benefit from their local libraries,”

“We are so grateful that our communities have come together as one voice to commit to the success of our children by increasing access to knowledge.” said Carol Frost, Peninsula Library System Assistant Director. An examination of Peninsula Library System user data revealed that 13,530 juvenile library cardholders, or 11% of all juvenile cardholders, were unable to use library services due to the amount of money owed on their library accounts. While juvenile patrons make up 25% of the total cardholders in PLS, they represent 32% of all patrons with a financial block.

Fees associated with unreturned or damaged items will still be charged. Ultimately, removing late fines means removing barriers to library materials and services. Libraries have always been considered the great equalizer and this is just one more way of leveling the playing field for our community located in the Silicon Valley Tech Corridor.

“It’s still not too late to sign up for the Summer Learning Challenge at any Peninsula library, and we hope families that have stayed away because of overdue fines will come in and sign up right away,” said Wolfgram.

###