Harford County Public Library Hosts 2026 Genealogy Week Programs
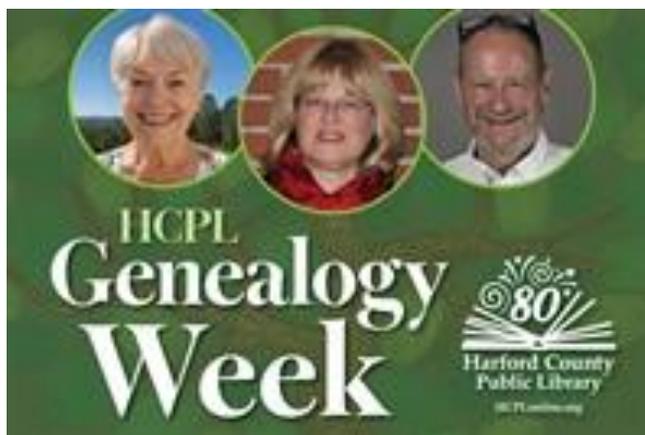

Harford County Public Library celebrates Genealogy Week January 26-31 by hosting three virtual programs. The featured programs are:

DNA Demystified: A Guide to Cracking Your Genetic Code, January 26, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Uncover the stories hidden within your genes, connect with relatives and gain a new appreciation for the science that links us all. Join Jamie Lee McManus Mayhew for an introduction to genealogy DNA testing, where she'll demystify scientific terms and concepts so that you can understand your own genetic code. She will also cover the different types of genealogy DNA tests available today and explain what each test can reveal about your ancestry and which is best suited for your personal goals. In addition, the session will cover important ethical considerations, privacy concerns and the limitations of DNA testing. Mayhew serves as president of the APG Writers SIG, a director of the Genealogical Speakers Guild and director of the Oakhurst, Ca., FamilySearch Center. Advanced registration is required at https://programs.hcplonline.org/event/14723931.

Introduction to AI for Genealogy, January 27, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Not sure what all the "AI" hype is about? This session, led by Peggy Jude, serves as an introduction to AI for genealogy. It's for beginners and those who may be apprehensive about AI. You'll leave with a greater appreciation for how AI tools can support your genealogical work. Jude, owner of Jude

Family Research Services, is a speaker, educator and researcher who specializes in and teaches areas of genealogical interest. Jude is also a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists and the Genealogical Speakers Guild. She is a graduate of ProGen and an alumnus of multiple advanced genealogical institutes. Advanced registration is required at https://programs.hcplonline.org/event/14723977.

Zigzagging Through German Church Records, January 29, 6:30 to 8 p.m. In this session, James M. Beidler will explain the methodology of using the baptismal, confirmation, marriage and burial records from German church registers. By utilizing the different bits of information found in each, researchers can zigzag their way to adding centuries to a pedigree. Known internationally as one of the top people in the field of German genealogy, Beidler has authored four books, including three on German family history. He's been executive director for the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania and was a reports editor for the globe-spanning research-for-hire firm Legacy Tree Genealogists. Beidler also writes "Roots & Branches," a weekly newspaper column and blog (at www.roots-branches.com), is a German Life magazine columnist and editor emeritus of Der Kurier, the quarterly journal of the Mid-Atlantic Germanic Society. Advanced registration is required at https://programs.hcplonline.org/event/14732881.

In addition to the virtual programs for Genealogy Week, genealogy discussion groups meet at the Bel Air Library on the first Monday of the month from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and at the Jarrettsville Library on the fourth Thursday of the month from 6:15 to 7:45 p.m. Topics vary by month and location, and fellow researchers are invited to attend to share and learn about techniques, tips and resources.

"This year's Genealogy Week programming offers unique topics for those just beginning their family tree search as well as for those who have been longtime researchers. Learning more about DNA testing is fascinating and seeing how AI can help with genealogy searches is a timely topic. Useful tips for navigating German church records are always beneficial to our genealogist enthusiasts," said Mary Hastler, CEO of Harford County Public Library. "While we celebrate Genealogy Week in January, the Library recognizes genealogy and genealogists all year with genealogical databases and other research tools available to our customers."

Harford County Public Library offers several genealogy databases, including Ancestry Library Edition, Heritage Quest Online, ProQuest Historical U.S. Newspapers and Fold 3. The Maryland Room at the Bel Air Library houses an array of genealogy and local research materials in addition to Harford County's Living Treasures Oral History

Collection. The Bel Air Library is also an affiliate library for FamilySearch, a program with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints that houses a catalog of 2.4 million rolls of microfilmed genealogical resources worldwide and access to millions of digital records. For more information, visit https://hcplonline.org/genealogy.php.

Harford County Public Library also offers access to the Harford Heritage Digital Archives, containing hundreds of documents, images and Harford County local history resources at https://hcplonline.org/localhistory.php.

Harford County Public Library operates 11 branches located throughout Harford County offering access to ideas that inform, entertain and inspire. Last year the Library interacted with its residents more than 12 million times, borrowing free materials, visiting branches and the website, using free WiFi, and attending classes and events. For more information, visit HCPLonline.org.