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January 17, 2024

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New Program Takes Up Residence in The Forge Makerspace

The Cranberry Public Library's Maker in Residence program has officially kicked off, with the first instructor focused on making The Forge Makerspace more inviting and accessible to everyone.

Josh "J." Riesen, an information technology professional with years of experience in instructing and advocating for hands-on creation, began his six-month Maker In Residence tenure on January 2.

In September 2023, Cranberry Public Library was awarded a \$30,000 grant from Arconic Foundation to support STEM learning in The Forge, a space that allows for creativity of any sort via tools like 3D printers, laser engravers, and much more.

In addition to more equipment, the grant is funding additional classes led by a series of instructors. Risen said he is thrilled to kick off the program and hopes to expand the capabilities of The Forge while also helping the library evolve.

"In this space, 'making' can be anything – it's the spirit that matters," he said. "It can be so intimidating, but at the end of the day it's about showing the power that the common person can have while creating something from nothing."

Armed with an IT background and lifetime of, "making things do what they're not supposed to do," Riesen brings a passion for creation to The Forge. His first program on February 6 is filled, with participants creating an acrylic lamp piece.

Library Director Leslie Pallotta said she is excited at the possibilities the Maker in Residence program presents.

"This program and this grant allow us to really push the limits of this Makerspace in a way that we have yet to do," she said. "Through the efforts of Makerspace Manager Mary Frances Reutzel, The Forge has become a wonderful community asset, and we believe this program will expand our reach and get more people to work hands-on while perhaps finding their own passion for creation."

For more information, visit cranberrylibrary.org.