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Smithsonian brings epidemic education to Perryville

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PERRYVILLE — As the quote by Spanish philosopher George Santayana goes: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

With that in mind, the Perryville branch library opened its “Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World” exhibit Tuesday, Jan. 15, to teach community members about how epidemics arise and how future ones can be handled. The exhibit will continue through Feb. 15.

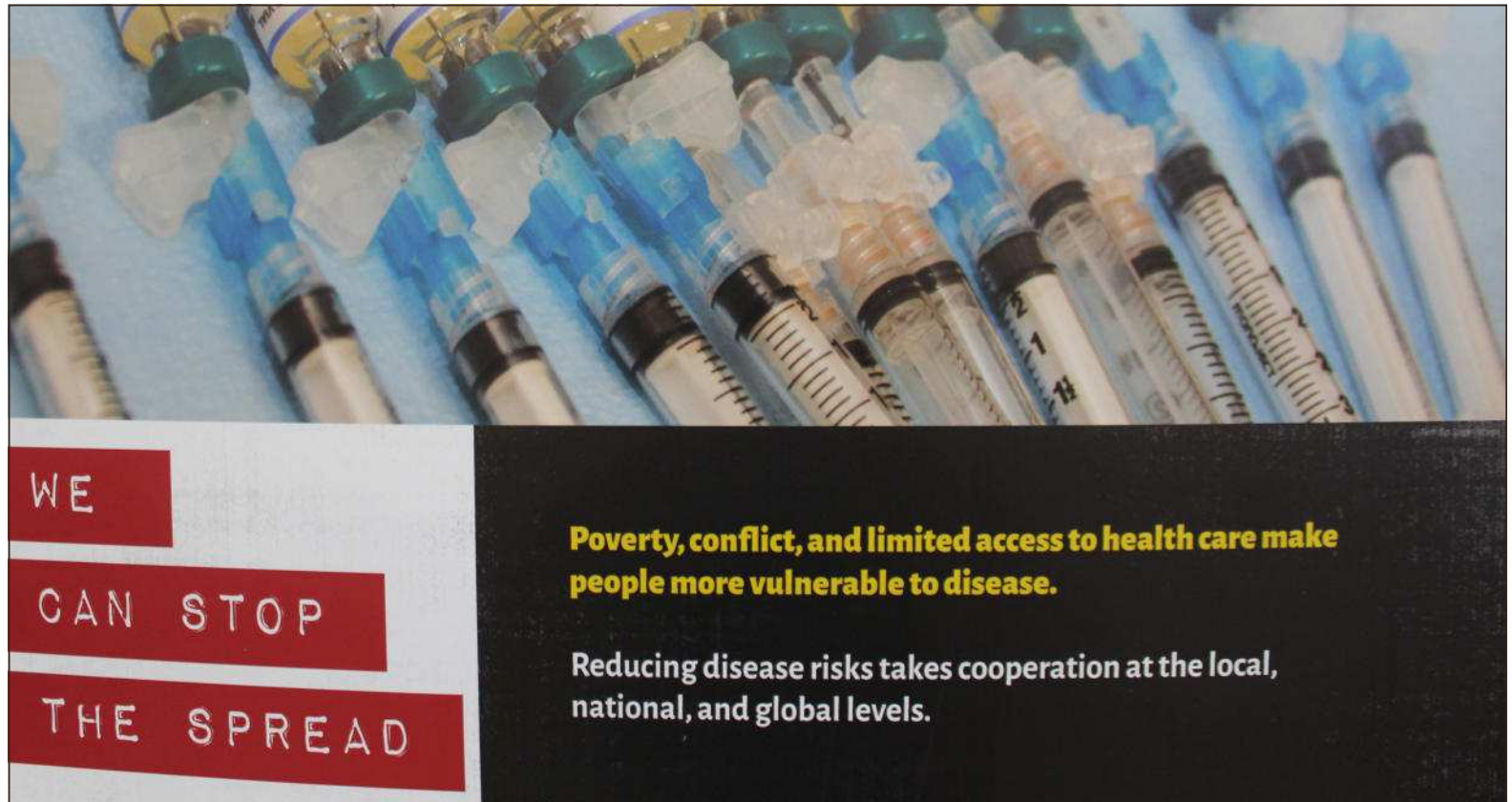
“Inviting our community to explore exhibits on a variety of themes each year helps connect to the world around us and provides opportunities for discovery of subjects we might not think about on an everyday basis,” said Frazier Walker, community relations manager for Cecil County Public Library.

The library is collaborating with the Aberdeen Proving Ground Discovery Center to bring the exhibit, which is part of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History’s “Outbreak” project, to Cecil County.

According to APG Discovery Center volunteer Alena Calm, the Smithsonian sought to bring the “Outbreak” exhibit to a wider audience by allowing libraries and other institutions to host their own installations.

An avid Perryville library patron herself, Calm wanted to bring the “do-it-yourself” installation to that branch. So, she worked with APG Discovery Center and Ripple branding to print and exhibit the work at the library.

“The APG Discovery Center tagline is ‘Where education, technology, and history come together.’ We felt that this exhibit, which



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ties in local history of the Spanish influenza at APG, to the science of how viruses can spread and mutate to cause epidemics, and is showcased with some interactive technology was the perfect first exhibit for APG Discovery Center to deliver to the local community,” she said.

The exhibit guides viewers through a series of panels designed by the Smithsonian. They chronicle how animal-borne viruses begin, spread and are dealt with when they become outbreaks.

“Everyone should come away from this exhibit understanding the basics of how disease is spread, how human activity plays a role in disease spread and most importantly how we as a society can come together to plan for and deal with outbreaks as they arise to protect ourselves and our neighbors,” Calm said.

Participants also can learn about epidemics through an interactive role-playing game where they will try to prevent an outbreak.

In addition to the exhibit, there

will be companion programs for teens at the Perryville branch library. At 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 14, and 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 15, “Operation Outbreak” will teach teens about the science behind viruses and how they spread.

Aside from the exciting science education, Calm said people should come out to see the exhibit to gain a better understanding about how such issues can affect all corners of society.

Walker said the “Outbreak” exhibit, like CCPL’s other events and

exhibits throughout the year, will hopefully spark interest in epidemic research or other topics.

“It is an opportunity to explore a topic in depth, to share facts and knowledge and to inspire further reading and investigation,” she said. “Our exhibits may engage a student to consider a career path or spark adults and teens’ curiosity to read and learn more about the topic. We are pleased to work with the APG Discovery Center to display this exhibit at the Perryville Branch.”

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