



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact **Gage Harter**.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County  
Program Title: Teen Photographers  
Program Category: Customer Service & Community Outreach

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Vincent Jones  
Title: Deputy County Administrator  
Signature: Vincent Jones

**2025 VACO ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOMINATION**  
**Loudoun County Public Library: Teen Photographers**

**Executive Summary**

Teen Photographers is an innovative Loudoun County Public Library program designed to make photography accessible to teens by utilizing smartphone cameras to encourage an appreciation of digital photography. Each month, staff blend photographic instruction with opportunities for hands-on experience through library resources to help teens develop the skills to use everyday items to replicate professional-grade photography techniques.

**The Challenge**

In Loudoun County, Virginia, there are few opportunities for teens to explore professional, specialized photography without a monetary fee. In addition, the cost of traditional photography equipment – cameras, lenses, lighting, batteries, etc. – can be a considerable barrier for teens, but a '2024 PEW Research Center article states that up to 95% of teens have access to a smartphone, meaning they have access to a digital camera.

Unfortunately, there is also a lack of professional-level instruction and mentorship available for teens interested in exploring the profession as well as support for teens thinking critically about photography, both commercially and as an art form. This program encourages creative exploration while providing the foundational principles of photography to support teens interested in learning more about this artistic medium beyond simply “pushing a button.”

**Innovation**

Teen Photographers is an innovative program designed to make professional-level photography accessible to teens by utilizing smartphone cameras to help teens develop the skills to use

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/>

everyday items to replicate professional-grade photography techniques. Through monthly programming, participants explore a wide range of photography specialties that often are not taught outside of private instruction or college-level photography courses.

Teen Photographers approaches photography through an active learning environment with opportunities for teens to experience the full photography workflow from capturing an image with their smartphone to the postproduction finishing touches. As a program, Teen Photographers connects teens to library resources by pulling inspiration from photographers, art history, and photographic art books as well as learning how to use industry-standard software through library licenses like Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom. The program also explores the idea of photography beyond the individual behind the camera by introducing teens to a variety of photography-adjacent careers such as photo styling and image editing.

### **Program Implementation**

Teen Photographers is a monthly program that blends photographic instruction with opportunities for hands-on experience through library resources. The program is run by library staff who are passionate about photography and sharing their knowledge and experience with teens. During each monthly session, staff create an active learning environment where teens develop an appreciation of digital photography by developing the skills and techniques to use everyday items to replicate professional-grade photography tools. To accomplish this, the program has the following objectives:

- Encourage teen appreciation for photography, design, and art history.
- Explore photography specialties like food photography, product photography, and more.
- Utilize library resources to encourage photographic creativity and expression.

- Introduce alternative careers within the photography industry.

The Teen Photographers program offers an exciting entry point to a wide range of photographic techniques by spending 90 minutes each month on one photography specialty, with topics announced in 4-month increments. The last month in the quarter features an Adobe Photoshop tutorial. Topics covered in 2024 included:

#### *Food Photography*

Teens examine food photography examples and advertising campaigns to understand photo composition before learning about industry techniques used in food styling, such as how to create food alternatives that will hold up for an extended time on a photo shoot and under a variety of lighting conditions, i.e., ice cream that won't melt.

#### *Product Photography*

Teens explore product photography through magazine images and product campaigns with an emphasis on how professional photographers aim to highlight specific details of a product. They are introduced to techniques used to control the way lighting interacts with materials such as glass, metal, fabric, etc.

#### *Self-Portrait Photography*

Teens learn how to pose subjects while also exploring different lighting setups. As a group, participants learn color theory basics as well as how black and white settings and colored lights can alter the mood of an image.

#### *Historical Techniques*

Teens dive into the history of photography from the invention of the camera to unique techniques that are still used today in museums, amusement parks, and the cinema.

### Lighting Demonstrations

Teens utilize off-camera lighting in the form of video lights to encourage photographic creativity by focusing on lighting, light modifications, and helping them develop the visual skills to “see light.”

### Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is an industry standard, so Teen Photographers offers teens the chance to learn how to use the software to edit their images. Teens experience the full photography workflow from capturing an image with their smartphone to the postproduction finishing touches.

### Cost of the Program

The Teen Photographers program uses funds from the Loudoun County Public Library’s programming budget. On average, the monthly expense for Teen Photographers materials is \$12.00.

### Bulk Materials for 12 Programs:

- white cardstock 8.5” x 11” – \$12.99.
- black cardstock 8.5” x 11” – \$10.40.
- aluminum foil – \$3.78.
- vellum paper 8.5” x 11” – \$8.99.

### Supplemental Costs:

*Depending on the topic/specialty being discussed each month and depending on what the library chooses to provide as a subject for photos, these costs will vary. Consider these examples from 2024 Teen Photographers:*

- 10 costume rings (product photography) - \$9.99.

- 1 lb. powdered sugar, 2 cans of vanilla frosting, and 1 box of ice cream cones (food photography) - \$13.36.

Optional Costs:

*Video lights introduce advanced lighting techniques for teens, but these are optional elements. Lighting techniques can be demonstrated with flashlights, window light, etc.*

- NEEWER RGB Video Light, 2500-10000K CRI97+ On Camera Selfie Light - \$89.99.
- NEEWER 2 Pack LED Light Panel Softbox for 660 – \$80.99.
- NEEWER 660 PRO II RGB LED Video Light with Stand Kit (2 lights) - \$319.99.

*Adobe Photoshop tutorials can be done with a single software license.*

- 1 - Adobe Photoshop license - \$30.00/month.
- 1 - iPad mini - \$499.00.

**Results and Impact**

Teen Photographers has been promoted to numerous middle and high schools across Loudoun County. Since it began in April 2023, Teen Photographers has seen an increasing number of teen participants each year with 2024 seeing 49 participants across 11 programs. On average, each monthly program sees 4 teens with several teens returning each month.

Throughout the program, teens learn the visual language of photography. Some of the photography principles discussed in the program can be applied to other art forms that teens may be interested in such as digital painting and drawing. Understanding the visual elements of photography encourages teens to speak confidently about their own work. In addition, the mentorship that the program provides allows teens to ask questions and receive constructive feedback on their photography.

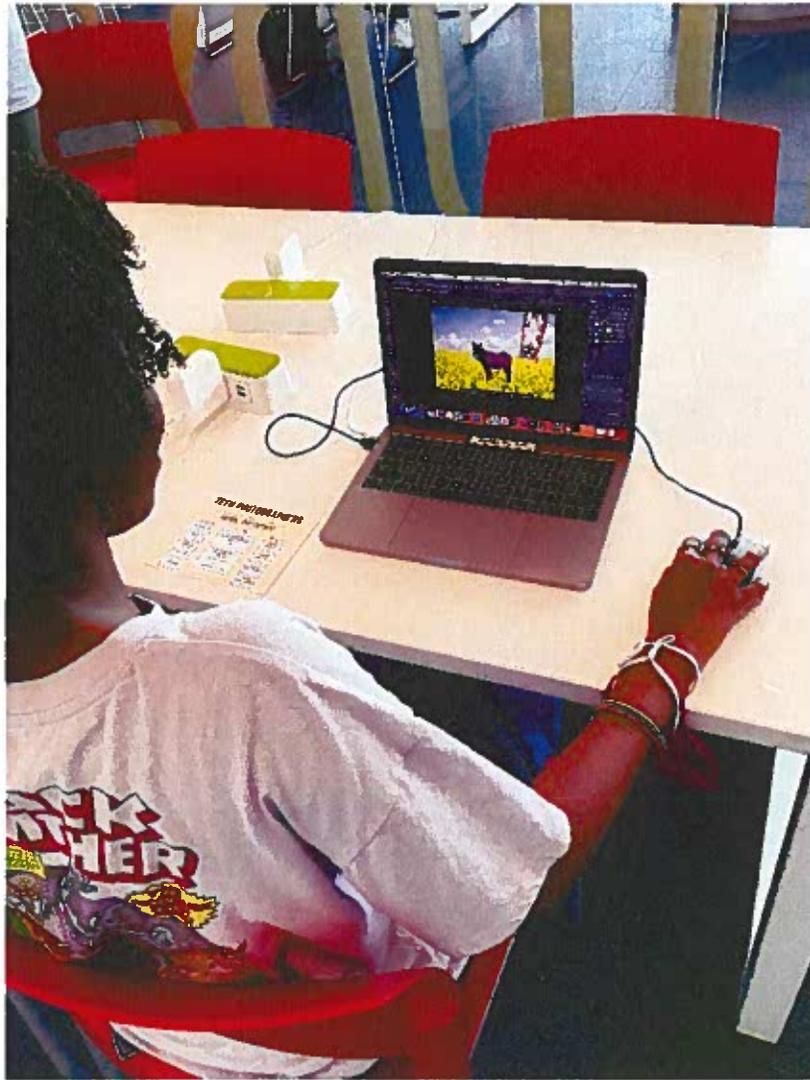
**Supplemental Materials**



*Historical Techniques, learning about and constructing a camera obscura out of cardboard.*



*Food Photography, fake slushies.*



*Adobe Photoshop tutorial.*

