

Hunterdon County Library Director's Report November 2018

Buildings and Grounds

The South County Branch is now open to the public. On October 20th, the library hosted a Grand Opening for the new location in East Amwell. Freeholders, Library Commissioners, East Amwell officials, representatives from the Friends of Hunterdon County Library (FOHCL), library staff and local residents celebrated the opening after a six year absence from East Amwell.

Discussions about the redesign of the HQ location continue. Design consultants have met with library administration and staff multiple times. The library staff continue to develop their ideas and share public feedback. The Director, Assistant Director and Head of Children's met with the branch manager of the new Warren County Branch. Furthermore, at *Library Staff Day* staff members walked around the library and gave input and feedback about potential redesign ideas. The Library Commission will have the opportunity to supply the next round of input.

Finances

The New Jersey Library Association continues to advocate for A3801/S2668 which would increase statewide Per Capita State Aid (PCSA) for libraries to \$10.5 million from \$3.676. For the current year, Hunterdon County Library's PCSA support declined to just over \$42,000 down from the previous year's \$51,000. The bill, if passed, would bring up the library's PCSA to approximately \$122,700, an increase of just over \$80,000.

The Director and Assistant Director have provided a Calendar Year 2019 (CY19) Budget Proposal to the Library Commission for discussion.

In the Libraries: Adult Services/Public Relations

In September, the North County Branch (NCB) hosted 15 adult programs. The highlights were the Neil Diamond Tribute, where 90 attended and the wait list was capped at 50. Dr. Ryan Rebozo had 50 attend his class on identifying wildflowers with Newcomb's Wildflower Guide. Michael Ivankovich had a SRO (78) program on a problem that many of us deal with: "What to do with stuff the kids don't want?!" Lastly, NCB had its first *Short Story Slam*. The 7 storytellers ranged in ages from high school to retired, with four women and three men. The audience of 21 had lots of fun, and all agreed to have another one.

Fourteen enthusiastic readers attended the 10/9 book discussion and expressed many diverse opinions about *The Woman in Cabin 10*. Attendance always increases when we are able to offer newer titles, since most book club members are avid readers who have already read all our old titles.

The October art show *5 Artists: Differing Visions, Differing Styles* was enhanced by an open house on 10/13 that attracted dozens of friends, family members and fellow photographers. Some of these folks belong to other artist groups and expressed interest in future shows.

During October, 17 volunteers donated over 81 hours of their valuable free time in a myriad of tasks that help make the library an orderly and pleasant place.

News from the Friday Morning Book Group - Every month the members have been scoring the books they read from 0 to 10. Twenty-five members gave their September title, *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles, an average score of 9.6! This is the highest rating for any book since scoring began at the end of 2013! In addition, people were asked to describe the book in one word. "unbelievable," "delicious," "sweeping," "amazing," "delightful," "mystical," "enriching," "suspenseful" and "uplifting" are just a few of the words given.

The entry deadline for this year's HCL Gingerbread Competition is Friday, November 16. New this year is a \$200.00 grand prize for Best in Show. The gingerbread houses will be on display in the gallery and lobby of HCL throughout the month of December 2018. The competition is sponsored by the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce and the FOHCL.

October at NCB was a busy month for adult programming with 21 programs offered. Among those were five different films, including the Manhattan Short Film Festival, the always popular Singing Bowls, a tai chi class, a reception for five artists, and more. Showman Jack McDade performed to a packed room, and brought with him several other musicians. Psychic Jane Doherty filled the house, and had some in tears with her readings and stories of her experiences.

In the Libraries: Youth Services

On October 11th, Laurie Wallmark returned to conduct another of her popular Coding Workshops for students in grades 1-4. There was a good turnout and parents requested more workshops like this one.

On Wednesday October 17th, HQ hosted a Pokémon Card Trading Night from 6-7pm. It was enthusiastically attended and another trading night is scheduled for late November.

The Fall Reading Buddy program started at NCB Youth Services (YS) in September. There are currently 30 children reading together once a week. After reading, they play a literacy-based game or make a craft related to their favorite book or character. This program pairs children in grades 1-4 with children in middle school or high school.

This year's Summer Reading Club, which ran from late June to early September, was another success. Countywide, 616 children ages 2 and up read a total of 19,460 titles! The YS Department held 109 programs which were attended by 3,506 – an average of 32 attendees per program. Programs included storytimes, magicians, musicians, animals, and hands-on science themes just to name a few.

Staff Updates

October 26th was another successful *Library Staff Day*. Eileen Palmer, Executive Director of the Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium, presented *Confidentiality of Library Records in New Jersey Libraries*. The presentation has created valuable discussion regarding patron privacy and library policy. The staff also had the opportunity to discuss possible renovation ideas for HQ.

A representative from the Adult Services Department attended a grant writing class sponsored by the NJ State Library. The library applied for and received a *Rural Technology Grant* for \$350. The money will go towards an educational set of 10 Micro bit microprocessors for computer classes.

Two librarians attended the *Franklin Institute Leap Into Science* training session held at Headquarters on October 2. Thirteen libraries from throughout the state attended the workshop. *Leap into Science* is a nationwide program from the *Franklin Institute Science Museum* that integrates open ended science activities with children's books. Materials and books to complete three science based literacy programs are included as part of the grant.

Two last notes: Staff also attended the annual Youth Services Forum at the Monmouth County Library. Cross training of staff continues as we focus on having increased flexibility

Outreach/Partnerships

Libraries in the two of the grammar schools in the Flemington-Raritan School District (Barley Sheaf and Robert Hunter) were closed at the beginning of the school year due to a mold issue. The librarian from Barley Sheaf, who is a part time librarian at HCL, approached the library about bringing the bookmobile to the schools until the crisis was over. The bookmobile has been to each school, almost weekly, since September, and finished up on November 13th. Students, grades K-4, came through the bookmobile and checked out all different types of books. Special thanks to the help of Youth Services staff for the additional books that were pulled and on hand for the students. The libraries have reopened and are back in business and their staff have expressed sincere thanks for our assistance during their crisis.

The Hunterdon County Library has been invited again to participate in the *Hunterdon County Business Expo and Food Showcase* at the NexLevel Arena on Case Boulevard in Flemington on Thursday, November 8 from 2:00pm-7:00pm. This is always a good opportunity to promote HCL's services, programs, and events to the community and to make connections with local businesses.

Technology

County IT is working on server upgrades. In December, the Polaris system will be upgraded. More details will be available in the coming weeks.

The Website/Social Media Task Force continues to meet. Some basic changes have already been completed on the website. Currently different staff are reviewing the current information the website to make recommendations about updating or eliminating existing pages.

Affiliates

No Update.

Respectfully Submitted by,

James K. Keehbler, Library Director and Jennifer Winberry, Assistant Director