

## LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT – January, 2011

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### Happy New Year!

#### Year in Review

One quarter of a century ago in July 1982 the Homer Township Public Library opened in the Reed School building, under a grant from the federal government. The following year a referendum passed, establishing the Homer Township Public Library District as a unit of local government. We have been serving Homer Township and Homer Glen as a first-rate information source with excellence these past 28 years. Today's libraries are more important than ever and function as community social centers and great equalizers, especially during current tough economic times. Library use has increased as people seek free books, DVDS and other materials along with high quality programs for entertainment and learning. We encourage residents to use the library and note that they can save money by doing so. Users enjoy free DVD movies, can access more than 120 magazines, check out brand new books, take free computer classes, register their children for a variety of fun programs, join many library social clubs, and benefit from the library more than ever in 2011. Residents use the library to pursue skills that prepare them for lifetime success at every age and stage in their lives. We offer thirty computers, both conventional and WIFI access, a collection of 106,000 items, an engaged staff to assist them, and round the clock access from work or home.

This past year has been an energizing and successful one at Homer Library. Statistics help us tell the story and showcase increasing usage both physical and online.

- **500-600** customers daily (40-50 visitors each hour, serving 153,094 visitors annually)
- **674** items circulate daily (228,358 items each year)
- **1,485** computer users monthly (59% increase)
- Experienced staff answer more than **80** Help Desk questions daily (over 29,000 annually)
- **679** annual programs for children, teens and adults (25% increase)
- More than **1,000** new library cardholders in the past two years

#### Grants

This year we are again proactively pursuing grants and sponsorship opportunities through outside funding sources and local agencies. As the LSTA program has been shuttered, new grants will be sought from local agencies and through creative partnerships.

**Penny Severns Literacy Grant** –This past year we were awarded this grant for Homer Township Public Library District's STAR (Supporting Targeted Reading) Program, offering a series of training activities and opportunities for low-literate and limited English proficient families. Programs provide reading enrichment through interactive family activities using library materials and programs.

Our 2011 application has been submitted. It is titled: The **KEY** to Success: **KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION & YOU**. We again have contacted Lewis University and Joliet Junior College Division of Family Services as partnering agencies and to assist us to offer new ESL classes.

## **IL Library Systems**

The Illinois Library Systems have finally received payments from the State of Illinois. The process of merging five system agencies continues. A web site has been developed to detail the progress and answer questions. It can be found here: <http://www.systemsmerger.info/>

On the PALS ends, costs for technical hosting and support will continue to be transferred to each library. Limits on the number of items that may be borrowed from other libraries may be enforced. Delivery continues to be a hot topic. We share books and resources with libraries in 850 locations in PALS alone, so funding to support delivery is critical and there are many discussions on this topic.

As PALS works to merge with the other regional systems to consolidate and restructure the organization and operations there will be many challenges. Merger meetings are available with an online link. This type of meeting access is a helpful tool to better understand the merger process and see it live in action.

## **Collection News**

Our collection stands at approximately 106,000 volumes. Plans to both update and reduce the collection continue. For the size of our current 14,000 sf building the library should have approximately 72,000 items available. For the size of a community with 33,000 residents it should have 160,000 items. That is the conundrum we face. And as we look to long range planning and see the library used more as a social center, we would like to offer expanded areas for quiet reading and study, as well as computers. The challenge continues to be lack of space to best support the communities we serve and meet State Standards.

## **DVDs**

To date we have far exceeded our donation goal and have received more than 1,000 DVDs. In total, the collection contains approximately 1,600 DVDs. Some movies are duplicates and some titles are new to the library collection. We welcome all and will continue to add titles to both the library and bookmobile through donations and budget planning.

## **Games**

We have begun to solicit gently used games from our residents and hope to have the same success that we did building the initial DVD collection through donations. We are accepting PlayStation, Xbox, and other games to assist us in establishing a circulating collection.

## **Reference**

We are continuing to review the adult non-fiction and reference collection to update and discard unused or materials that are no longer relevant. Some materials will be interfiled in our adult non-fiction, as well.

## **Long Range Planning**

A chart has been developed for possible long range plans, including timelines. It will be included in your packet. Many of the items build upon each other in a very logical manner. A separate chart for building update/costs will be forthcoming.

## Programs + Events

- ➔ **Visit with Santa** - We partnered with the Chamber of Commerce to provide a photo opportunity with Santa in early December. More than 200 people attended this fun morning event and all pictures were posted to the library's flickr photo site.
- ➔ **Reptile Club** –We will continue the Reptile Club this spring, which reached a core group of children, mainly boys. The final program featured “Pet a Snake” and was extremely popular.
- ➔ **Winter Reading Program** - The Winter Reading Club begins this month. This will encourage residents to participate in a fun incentive program at their library. This year I established a significant donation from Harris Bank as primary sponsor along with the Chicago Wolves. We thank all sponsors for their ongoing generosity.
- ➔ **Letters to the Troops** – This January initiative offers a wonderful opportunity for community members to write a troop letter using our form, which will then be sent on by the library. We are also collecting items to send to them.
- ➔ **American Dream Literacy Program** – We held a family day kick-off event January 22<sup>nd</sup>, which was well attended. ESL classes begin in February through April. This and more quality programming is through the grant award from ALA and Dollar General.
- ➔ **Geek the Library** – Everyone has something they are passionate about and the Geek the Library program is a publicity campaign to remind customers that we have materials that inspire and empower their life-long learning. Libraries improve lives and the Geek campaign will be on ongoing initiative to encourage patrons to support their library in return.
- ➔ **Volunteer Corp for Teens** – Community service hours are now required at local high schools. The library offers a variety of projects to assist teens and promote leadership.

Outreach and programming is expanding and the bookmobile is in more demand to anchor community programs and events, such as the Expo, Arbor Day, etc. We have organized a variety of new programs and initiatives which are detailed in the upcoming newsletter.

Upcoming library events and programs include:

- ◆ February Winter Reading Program
- ◆ February Letters to the Troops
- ◆ March 7 - 13 Teen Tech Week
- ◆ April 10-16 PATRON APPRECIATION WEEK / National Library Week /Snapshot Day

## Building and Grounds

- ✓ Simplex undertook the annual fire equipment inspection. The report was positive with no issues to be addressed.
- ✓ Forest Alarm undertook maintenance on the entry alarm, which has been cleaned and adjusted.

### **Food for Fines**

Our annual Food for Fines donation program brought in more than 1,200 items that were donated to the local food pantry. The previous year library users gave 700 food items. We extend our appreciation to our community for such excellent support.

### **Marketing the Library**

- Articles in the newspaper include our library Year in Review in the Homer Horizon, as well as other program information. The newsletter will be provided via the Horizon as an insert this month.
- We are sending monthly library calendars to the schools in our district; reaching approximately 10,000 students. We are supplying the same monthly library calendar to local area daycares. Some of the schools now scan the documents into a parent portal for parents to access online.
- Positive press coverage continues from the local newspapers.
- The library outside sign is encouraging program sign-up and the newsletter being on the web. We hope to encourage patrons to know what we offer @ the website.

### **Hours**

Library hours include Sundays during the school year, September - May. Eliminating Sundays from June through August generated a cost savings of approximately \$7,000.

### **Personnel**

Currently, I am seated on several boards: Illinois Library Association, Goodings Grove Lions Club, Illinois Library Employee Benefit Plan, and the Homer Glen Foundation. My participation in these organizations helps provide opportunities that allow Homer Library to be recognized in a positive way. Other management staff (Sara McCambridge, Alexandra Tyle-Annen, Kitty Mitchell, Jody Olivieri, Jody Studer, and Carol McSweeney) also serves on professional committees or boards.

### **In Conclusion**

What's next at your library? Long range planning to provide the best in future services, collections and programs that bring value to the Homer community. We want to encourage residents to make Homer Library their "GO TO" place in 2011.

My report is intended to give you a good overview and pertinent information on our local (and regional) issues. If there is any issue that you would like information about or if you need anything detailed more fully, please let me know.

Lastly, I thank you for your support of library staff. The staff appreciation event is a proactive way to acknowledge staff effort. The foundation of support and goodwill you establish through this event and support policies for staff is well-recognized and appreciated. We value the courtesy and professionalism you bring to the board. Your thoughtfulness and willingness to do your best for the Library and the Homer Community is evident. Thank you. I wish you a New Year of wonderful opportunities.

*Sheree Kozel-La Ha*

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Library Director

1/22/11