

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

September 2004

Library Director Report and Highlights

September, 2004

Submitted by Pam Kiesner

A Great Staff Does a Great Job

Attached to this report are the written reports from some of our staff members. You will read Gayle's account of our now successful migration to an upgraded automated library system, Horizon, which involved the hard work and re-training of our entire staff. The library remained open throughout the project, and the staff served the public well. They all are to be congratulated.

You also have Scott's report from children's services, and the important work the children's team is doing to serve children and the people who work with children. Sandy Zell has just returned from a trip to Nakhodka, serving as an ambassador for "We Share a Story". In addition, you will have Donna's report on Fairhaven statistics and activity.

Director's Short-Range Goals and Three-Week Highlights

One of the important responsibilities of a Library Director is to assure that the library is doing the right things to meet the needs of the community it serves. Relationship building is a key element in knowing the community, lending visibility to the library, and positioning the library in the community. This is a goal of mine - to know individuals and groups in the Bellingham and surrounding areas, and to connect the library to the public. Developing those relationships between who we are, what we do, and what our customers need and want is crucial as we begin to make the case for library development - and support - in this community.

Therefore, in three weeks your library director has made it a priority to begin the following:

1. Get to know the library staff, and become knowledgeable about current library operations:

To the staff's credit, they ably migrated to our new Horizon system and at the same time warmly welcomed a new Director, making room in their schedules to meet with me and answer my questions. In conducting, attending, or observing operational meetings I have begun to learn more from the various teams at work in the library: management, circulation, reference, and a meeting of the entire staff. In addition, I have met individually with staff about the budget, and with the individuals who comprise our management team to find out their areas of responsibility and expertise, and ask about their goals and concerns. The staff has been invaluable in letting me know how library operations are currently being handled, and have offered their suggestions for improvements.

2. Get to know the community and begin to develop an active library presence in the community through individual relationship building:

Maintaining a good relationship with the Whatcom County Library System is critical, and to that end I've met with Joan Airoidi, Director of the system, toured their system headquarters and met most of the WCLS staff.

We have a committed and superb group of Friends, and I attended their recent meeting and their successful booksale.

Gayle and I met with Sue Tercek, who will be at your library board meeting to share information about the fireplace room project at Fairhaven.

Don Drake, Director of the Whatcom Community Foundation, and I met so I could learn about our fund at the Foundation, as well as how the Foundation might be helpful to us in the future.

A key component in building a direct line between the library and the community is attendance at community events, and your library director attended several, including:

Mount Baker Theatre Opening

St. Sophia Greek celebration

Harvest Dinner at the Village Green

United Way Kick-off Luncheon

I have also begun to learn more about how we are connected in the state library organization, and how to become linked with that important professional communication network.

3. Actively participate in city-related groups, and introduced myself to key city leaders and departments:

My first day included a meeting with Mayor Mark Asmundson. I have also met with Grant Deger, City Council member and liaison to the library and have met most of the other City Council members. Lorna Klemanski, Human Resources analyst, provided me with a tour of city hall and met staff whom the library works with in a variety of City departments. I also attended the All City Employee/Family Picnic and met several other employees and department heads.

The Library Director is a member of several city committees, and in the past three weeks I have attended/participated in the City Center Action Group, and met Kirsten Shelton, Downtown Renaissance Network Director. Other committee meetings included the System Steering Committee, chaired by the ITSD Director, and the City Department Heads, chaired by the Mayor.

4. Review our facility development status, and begin to formulate strategy for immediate action:

A thorough review is a priority of mine, and then, with your guidance, to formulate strategy for action. To that end, I am becoming familiar with the facility issues you previously outlined in the facility needs analysis; I am reviewing and organizing the materials that have been formulated thus far in the process.

I spoke with Dick McKinley, Director of Public Works, about the geotechnical study process, which is slated to begin this year. The time frame we have been provided by DPW is below:

September 27, 2004: resolution to City Council to transfer necessary funds for the study

October: Advertise for consultants

November: Negotiate contract, consultant begins

December-January: Perform geotechnical borings, analyze results

February: Draft reports from consultants

March: Final report

DPW staff anticipates that this is a conservative schedule, and that the final results may be more likely available by the end of the year. I will continue to track the project and keep you informed.

While this study is being performed, it will be important to actively work on other facility development components to keep us moving forward. I will be formulating a strategy, with your help and guidance, which we can review on a frequent basis. At our September 21 Board meeting, I will look forward to discussing this further with you.