

FRIENDS of Decorah Public Library

— Fall 2020 Issue —



DPL DURING THE PANDEMIC:

More Vital Than Ever

The Decorah Public Library Board made the decision to close the library in mid-March out of concern for the health and well-being of the community. While Governor Reynolds allowed libraries to reopen later in the spring, many libraries across the state- including DPL- lacked the PPE and cleaning supplies recommended by the State Library of Iowa and the CDC, and so elected to remain closed.

Once the building closed, staff members quickly adapted to working remotely in order to provide digital services including e-books, digital audiobooks, film streaming, programming, book recommendations, and tech assistance.

The Board discussed a Phased Expansion of Services (Reopening) Plan at their May 11 meeting. The plan includes six stages, the first three of which- preparation, material returns, and curbside pickup- were approved for immediate implementation.

Immediately after the May meeting, Library staff began planning for the relocation of work spaces to allow for social distancing, and started preparing a system by which to accept returned materials (including a 72 hour quarantine) and for offering curbside materials pickup. At that time, staff returned to work in the building at full capacity. Materials returns were accepted beginning in mid-May and curbside services began June 1.

In June, covid numbers were declining and it appeared that benchmarks for moving forward with the next phase of re-opening (limited public building access) was likely to be approved in July. Numbers changed drastically shortly afterward, so the Board opted for the Library to remain closed, based upon their previously-approved plan.

Interior renovations were slated to begin mid-August, and due to safety and liability concerns, it was known from the outset (when detailed planning began in January 2020, pre-pandemic) that the building could not be open to the public during that time. The Board will discuss next steps in the Phased Reopening Plan during upcoming meetings. It is anticipated that renovations will be complete by January 1.

Library Director Kristin Torresdal said, "Library staff continue to work hard to meet community needs via curbside materials pick-up, hand-curated book bundles, digital services, and remote tech assistance during the library renovation, which, for better or worse, has followed immediately on the heels of the covid closure.

If you haven't had a chance to try our curbside services, feel free to give us a call and we'll walk you through the process- our staff are excellent at suggesting books for all ages. We also have many options available online, including e-books, digital audiobooks, film streaming, and digital programming. Our website and social media pages highlight additional resources from community partners and colleagues across the U.S. If you have a question or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out via phone or email."

Friends memberships are renewed annually each October, so watch your mailbox for a renewal letter.

Celebrate Friends of Libraries Week (October 18-24) by considering a gift towards future building initiatives!



DPL GETS FRESH

Fall 2020 Interior Remodel

Decorah Public Library staff report that interior renovations are underway after some initial delays due to Covid-19-related manufacturing shutdowns and busy contractor schedules. The project, which was initially slated to run August-October, is now scheduled for October-December. This particular project has been in the works since 2017, and follows a series of exterior renovations completed in summer/fall 2019.

The current phase of the renovation project includes the replacement of failing skylight panels, repairs or possible replacement of the loading dock roof, the installation of new commercial grade flooring, and interior painting- all of which require significant relocation of library materials, technology, and furniture. Library staff will share photos of the work-in-progress on social media for the duration of the project.

Library Director Kristin Torresdal said, "We can't wait to share the updated building with the community when it's completed. While the delay is frustrating, we believe that the end result will be well worth the wait."

"We're thrilled to be nearing the completion of the project list that we drew up in 2017, and we're already looking forward to additional goals for future projects at the DPL! One such goal is to install windows in the historic (west) side of the building that mimic the original arched windows from 1911. If you're reading this and thinking 'I'd like to contribute to that!' you're in luck- you can donate funds to the Friends and earmark them for the Window Project (donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law). I'd be happy to discuss this idea further with anyone who is interested." Torresdal continued.

"Why do I love the DPL? Let me count the ways: Audiobooks on Libby, which I listen to on my phone when walking, cleaning, cooking; Zoom book club; curbside pick up of books we have put on reserve; and a book bundle and Monday Make and Take projects to share with my granddaughter. We are so fortunate to have such a wonderful resource in our community."

CHANGES IN FRIENDS BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Friends of the Library Board welcomes three new members: Sue Luzum, Tom Murray, and Marilyn Rue.

Sue Luzum met her husband Lyle while a student at Luther College, and they moved to northeast Iowa with daughter Stephanie from Illinois to live on his family farm and now reside in Decorah. She worked as a bookkeeper, including at Luther for 21 years. Sue Luzum is an avid reader and has been a Board member at Calmar Public Library, Financial Secretary at Calmar Lutheran Church, and part-time bookkeeper at the Depot Outlet.

Tom Murray is retired from Luther College, where he worked as a Development Officer. He and wife Jean were from the Quad Cities area and have two sons. In addition to reading as a hobby, Tom loves to fish and has a passion for water quality; he is involved with the Iowa Coldwater Conservancy.

Marilyn Rue and husband Loyal moved to Decorah in the 1970's, and she was a Decorah Public Library employee for 15 years. They have three adult children and four grandchildren. Marilyn also loves to read and enjoys spending time "virtually" with grandchildren by reading stories with them.

The Board thanks four members who have completed their terms: Jud Barclay, Past President Jane Kemp, Kris Peterson, and Jim Womeldorf. Board members continuing their terms include Karla Brown, Kelly Coppola, Kathy Johnson, Carolyn Mottley, Cynthia Peterson, and Mark Ruen. Friends of the Decorah Public Library exists to provide funding for the purchase of books, furniture, software, equipment, and programming beyond the regular city/county budget.

"I'd like to express my admiration for the library's management and staff for providing us with such amazing service and resources in this time of uncertainty. My family has enjoyed using the e-books and audiobooks and I was ecstatic when Kanopy became available. We've recently started curbside services and it's been wonderful to bring new physical materials into our home."

"Thank you again for making this type of [Take-and-Make] craft available, it is such a wonderful way to keep fun activities going when the library is not able to be open (a decision I continue to support!). It is a very creative way to ensure people have fun things to do. Today we picked up our craft kit and a fresh bag of books and felt very fortunate for our library staff who are working so hard to keep us entertained. Thank you again for your creativity and thoughtfulness for our community!"

RSVP ADAPTING, THRIVING DURING PANDEMIC

By Mark Ruen

Like the library itself, Northeast Iowa RSVP (the Retired and Senior Volunteer program for which DPL serves as fiscal agent and host) has worked hard—and successfully—to continue its mission during the uncertain times of the COVID pandemic.

One way that RSVP is maintaining this level of activity is by utilizing at-home service opportunities for its volunteers. According to RSVP Director Deana Hageman, a survey was sent out to "stations" (organizations and sites utilizing RSVP volunteers) to determine whether they have such "virtual" service needs. For example, a food pantry has volunteers taking calls in their home from patrons seeking help in placing their orders. Similarly, a daycare needed help assembling informational folders, and a volunteer did this from home, rather than on site.

Of course, there have been events that have had to change drastically, reducing the need for on-site volunteers. For instance, fund-raising walks and runs such as the Alzheimer's Walk, the Driftless Half Marathon, and the Suicide

Awareness Walk have all gone virtual or else scaled back significantly this year. However, RSVP's overall statistics indicate that the Program is continuing to provide services at a high level. Director Hageman points out, "Despite COVID, volunteers logged 26 hours more than last year with at best 29% of stations being open to volunteers for 3.5 months of the year!"

Some additional statistic clearly bear this out:

- January – 252 volunteers logged 3608.50 hours (including training for the highly-utilized tax assistance program), which is 59% of total volunteers.
- April – 50 volunteers logged 788.75 hours (including 5 food pantries), which is 11% of total volunteers.
- July – 252 volunteers logged 1232.5 hours, which is 59%.

In closing, a comment from Director Hageman: "I am very proud of the volunteers who have continued to give of their time and talents to their communities to make sure the needs of individuals and families are met." For further information about the Northeast Iowa RSVP Program, visit them on the web (www.decorah.lib.is.us/RSVP), via Facebook (www.facebook.com/NEIRSVP/), or phone (563) 277-5181.



"I just wanted to share my support for your decision to keep the library closed—I imagine you may be getting some grief from people who think you SHOULD BE OPEN.....we hear that from some of our clients as well. BUT we are not going to do in person sessions for the rest of this year.....Just wanted to say, good work, thank you and thanks for doing the great job of curbside pick up too!!"."

"I am so impressed by the way you are steering the library, staff, and community through this pandemic. In my opinion you are spot on in your judgements and present your rationale in a clear way. You're keeping your eye on the long term projects [building updates and more] introduces some hope which I appreciate."



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Sue Luzum
Tom Murray
Marilyn Rue
Mark Ruen

decorahfriends@gmail.com

For details about upcoming programs or to see pictures from recent events, like Decorah Public Library on Facebook!

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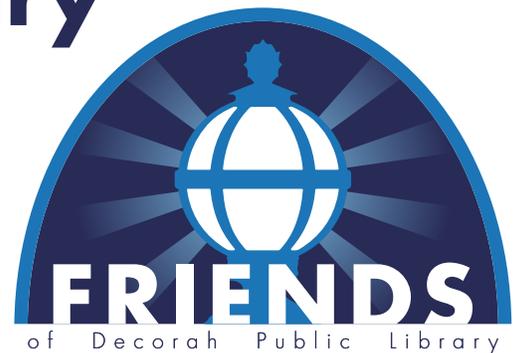
FRIENDS of the Library Membership Form

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