

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT – DECEMBER 2017

A YEAR IN REVIEW...

JANUARY



- Skating the Square was a success despite the warm ups. Thanks go out to the Gillett Fire Department and the city crew who helped to create and maintain the rink, along with many other volunteers who helped with the shoveling. Over 50 pair of ice skates have been donated to our library and folks can “check them out” using their library cards. We scheduled several skating parties when the kids were off from school, and many first-time skaters had an opportunity to ice skate here.
- The Greater Green Bay Foundation, along with Sally Ebenreiter, visited our facilities. They were impressed with our project, and will keep us in mind as we move forward with the outdoor spaces, as there are other donors in the GGBF who may consider us.

FEBRUARY

- VITA tax prep begins in the Community Center - VITA has been using our library to provide free tax service for many years, and this was the first year that they were able to use the Community Center. This service is provided every Tuesday from February – April. They had 3 tax preparers and each of them used a different small meeting room in the Community Center to prepare taxes which worked out well, more private than in previous years. We’re the only location in Oconto County that provides this service so folks come from all around northeast Wisconsin.

MARCH

- The Community Center continues to gain in popularity with County organizations. Although the majority of Community Center users are non-profit (and therefore don’t pay a fee to use the facility), the Community Center is bringing people into Gillett from all around the County which is a good thing...this was one of our goals for this project. Our central location makes it ideal for many groups to meet.
 - The Oconto County Economic Development Corp. (our County Tourism Dept.) is now holding their board meetings in our Community Center each month. They used to meet in Suring, and have now moved to Gillett. They always cater in a lunch for their board, which will benefit some of our Gillett businesses (i.e. OJ’s Midtown, Spirits).
 - Several more departments from the UWEX are now meeting in our facility. Sarah Mills Lloyd (our County AG agent) planned an all-day event for area farmers this past spring...they liked the convenience of using the 3 smaller meeting rooms there for break-out sessions on that day.
 - Other groups who use the Community Center include: The Northern Gardeners, Marinette/Oconto County Literacy Council, Oconto County HCE (Home & Community Education), quilting guilds, school committees (Kids for Running), church committees, Gillett City departments, Girl Scout troops, Gillett Civic Club, Gillett Business Association, Gillett Lions Club, Sunshine Daycare Center, Oconto County Fair Board, Livestock Committee for the Oconto County Fair, CESA 8, VFW, American Legion, Gillett Woman’s Club, Oconto County 4H Leaders Association, and the Gillett School District.



- **Teen Zone opens in the Community Center!**

In an effort to reduce crowding in the library afterschool as well as to provide structured/supervised activities for the teens, we started a new program called TEEN ZONE. Due to our budget, we can only staff this program one afternoon/week and it's scheduled for Wednesdays from 3:30 – 5:30 in the Community Center.

- I worked with Hillside Assembly again for a community-wide Easter event and we received great support from the community - \$950 donations came in from area business/organizations. The event was held at the Gillett Elementary School.
- We began doing community outreach for two programs each week...one to Serenity Gardens Assisted Living facility and one to the Sunshine Daycare. Cathie from the library spends an hour in each facility reading to both the seniors and the children, and these programs have been very well received by both organizations.
- Our library coordinated a Garden Series of programming this month, and all events were well attended. The "Farm Near the Falls" gals did a program in the Community Center on Gardening with Herbs (and in May they had an Open House at their greenhouses for all the attendees), Scott Reuss from the UWEX gave a program in the Center on Vegetable Gardening, and the Flower Shoppe here in Gillett did a program on Flower Gardening that was held at their greenhouse.
- I began proctoring a college student who is taking online courses; she takes her tests here at the library.
- I completed online course through UW-Madison on "Achieving Top Search Engine Status".
- There was a beautiful display of daffodils and tulips in the Community Square this month, planted and paid for by Friends member Gary Jaeger and myself.



MAY



- I was one of 4 librarians from across the state of Wisconsin that was asked to make a presentation to the Indianhead Federated Library System in Eau Claire on our community projects. The other librarians came from Minocqua, Appleton, and Columbus. It was a great opportunity to showcase our library and community.
- The Teen Zone continues to be a success (Cathie is doing a great job with the teens). This month, Julie Allen from “For You With Love” taught a class on Flower Arranging, and all were able to take an arrangement home for the special woman and/or Mom in their life for Mother’s Day. On another week, I donated \$80 worth of flowers and the teens planted up all of our outside planters.

JUNE

- We had a successful first Downtown Market which featured “Music on the Square” with Missy Tucker, and we had over 65 visitors to the Market that day. Times Herald Editor Warren Bluhm wrote up a wonderful article that appeared on the front page in the June 7th edition with a large color photo of from the Market. The online article can be viewed here:

<http://www.octimesherald.com/articles/2017/06/07/community-square-working-out-planned>



Times Herald Photo by Warren Bluhm

Community Square working out as planned Library friends hope to attract rental revenue

By: Warren Bluhm wbluhm@wolfrivermedia.com

Shoppers check out the deals Thursday during the first Downtown Market of the season in Gillett. Music wafted over a crowd of people chatting, catching up with each other under a bright sun Thursday as vendors sold their wares at a dozen booths at the Ebenreiter Community Square in downtown Gillett.

The scene at the inaugural Downtown Market of the summer was exactly what local leaders envisioned three years ago when they embarked on a makeover of the area adjacent to the Gillett Public Library. After the BMO Harris Bank branch office closed March 1, 2014, library officials paid \$120,000 for the 2,367-square-foot building at 204 E. Main St. The Friends of the Library and library board of directors saw an opportunity to provide meeting rooms for the community, open up space at the library facility and develop a community square – an outdoor area for community use on the green space between the two neighboring buildings.

Sally Ebenreiter and her family came forward with \$150,000 toward the development of the community square that now bears their name and was dedicated last fall. The outdoor space will accommodate a variety of functions, such as the Downtown Market and Music on the Square events in the summer and ice skating in winter.

“What we’re doing here is a unique thing for a library to do,” library director Kay Rankel said Thursday. Rankel was one of four library directors who went to Eau Claire May 11 to make a presentation at an in-service session about Community Projects to member libraries of the Indianhead Federated Library System. The panel discussion followed three brainstorming sessions the western Wisconsin library group organized about ways libraries can engage their communities.

Since the Ebenreiters and other donors were recognized at the dedication ceremony, the community square has grown in popularity. The Downtown Market, now in its third summer, moved in right away from 4-6 p.m. Thursdays, and Music on the Square events began in September. During the winter the Gillett Fire Department brought in 2,000 gallons of water for an ice-skating rink, Rankel said.

With Gillett centrally located in the county, the center makes a good meeting place for groups such as the Oconto County Economic Development Corp. and University of Wisconsin-Extension, she said. Nonprofit organizations may use the facilities for free, and the library is hoping to make some money with them, as well. “We’re looking to rent it out more often,” Rankel said. “This is an ideal location for events, like graduation parties – ice-skating parties in the winter.”

Thursday, the Missy Tucker Band played in a corner of the square at the first Downtown Market of the summer, and shoppers could buy potted plants, jewelry, clothes and craft items, honey, maple syrup and rabbits. Children played organized games on the front lawn of the Community Center, and book lovers browsed the library shelves. Musicians and vendors interested in being a part of the market are encouraged to call Rankel at 920-855-6224. “A library is not just about books anymore,” she said.

- Because of the above article, Sandy Hubbard from Seneca Foods submitted a request to their corporate offices for a Community Grant...she submitted the above article from the paper along with her request to corporate, and our first check of \$150 was received 6-29-17. Per Sandy, the check amount is based on the number of fulltime employees at their plant in each community, and we will be receiving a \$150 check each year from now on.

JULY

- I applied for and our library received a grant from the **Little Rapids Corp** for \$17,600 to pay for the cost of the pergola in the **Community Square** as well as for an **outdoor checkerboard** on the grounds which was **great news!** Preston Zimmerman from the GSD and the Industrial Arts class plan to construct the pergola in the spring of 2018, and a local Scout troop plans to build the checkerboard.
- I was the first Oconto County librarian asked to make a presentation to the Oconto County Board of Supervisors, and I did this on July 20. Board members asked several questions and complimented our library for a job well done which was good to hear. All 6 Oconto County librarians will be presenting to the board during their monthly meetings at the courthouse from now on.

AUGUST

- Our Summer Reading Program ended with the annual Auction/Sale/Raffle hosted by professional auctioneer Jeff Bahrke. Many area residents donated prizes and/or funds to provide rewards for all of our summer reading program kids.

SEPTEMBER

- We held another “MUSIC ON THE SQUARE” event @ THE DOWNTOWN MARKET on 9-21...Bob and Missy Tucker performed again on this day.
- We started up a **PRESCHOOL STORYTIME** program again that meets every Friday morning.
- I completed online course from UW Madison on “Building Teams That Work”.
- Jody B gave her notice and we started the search for her replacement. Cathie and I worked/volunteered a lot of hours during the month as we were short-handed, and our new employee Betty was hired in mid-October.

OCTOBER



“Halloween @ Hogwarts” was the theme to this year’s **Community Haunted House**, and it was another successful event. We had over 25 volunteers that worked hard to put this event on, and it attracts residents from all around northeast Wisconsin. Our library is getting a reputation now for putting on a “good show”, and many commented that they appreciated the detail we put into the House; even those who didn’t know Harry Potter said it was great. This is our biggest fundraising event, and our volunteers are already planning for next year!



- Teen Zone continues to gain in popularity, and thanks to a grant from Thrivent (applied for by Tami) we were able to fund several Teen Zone programs this fall.
- I was one of 8 who was featured in a special Thanksgiving edition pull-out section from Wolf River Media. The others whose are featured in the special section are Adam Bieber, Shawano County sheriff; Stacey Cicero, director, Safe Haven; Wendy Crawford, Leadership Shawano County/Boys & Girls Club of Shawano County; Ken Harter, Oconto Falls School Board/Oconto County Fair Board; Charlie Harvey, owner, Charlie's County Market, Shawano; Todd Senzig, owner, Senzig's Fine Furnishings; and Bill Switala, Wittenberg village president.

Our local editor from the Times Herald newspaper (Warren Bluhm) recommended me for that special article because of all the things we do and/or have done here at the library. This special section appeared in the Times Herald, Shawano Leader, and the papers in Clintonville and Wittenberg. I was asked to write a 750 essay on what I'm thankful for and it was a wonderful opportunity to promote our library, the community, and all that we've accomplished here.

individually in our lives.

Thanksgiving — so meaningful and special to them.

special places we all know and love.

Gratitude for those who make Gillett a better place



WOLF RIVER MEDIA PHOTO BY GREG MELLIS

Kay Rankel, Gillett Library director for 20 years, celebrates the addition of the library community center. Rankel has been a force in both the vision and fund raising of the project.

By KAY RANKEL

As the director of the Gillett Library, I'm most thankful for our community and those who have supported our library throughout the almost 20 years that I've been here. We have accomplished some amazing things for a library of our small size due to several forward-thinking individuals and the generosity of our community.

Thanks to donations (no taxpayer money), our library was able to purchase the bank building next door, and it was converted into a community center which opened in 2013. Public meetings take place there, and residents can rent out this facility for family gatherings. This was the first phase of our community center/community square project.

The second phase involved renovations in the library, which converted the former meeting room space (which was no longer needed, due to the creation of the community center) into library space. This renovation almost doubled the size of the library.

Phase three involved con-

verting the outdoor area between both buildings from a parking lot into a community square. A downtown market and Music on the Square events take place there during the summer months, and the community can Skate the Square during the winter. I'm grateful to our Gillett Fire Department for making the ice each year; the Gillett city crews that help to maintain the rink; to the many who have donated ice skates (we now have more than 50 pairs that we can loan out!) and to those who help shovel snow after storms. Phase two and phase three were made possible thanks to local resident Sally Ebenreiter, who donated the funds for these projects.

Although we have more to do in order to complete the entire outdoor space, our library is grateful to the Little Rapids Foundation, which is funding a new pergola in the square next spring. This pergola will be a staging area for entertainment as well as an area that will provide protection from the elements.

There are many more

who deserve thanks for having helped our library positively impact the community. This list includes: all library staff over the past years who donated their time to create wonderfully unique programming; Friends of the Library members who voluntarily work hard on a variety of projects that benefit our library; the many library board members I have worked with over the years; as well as the many Gillett city council members who have provided support.

Thanks also to the residents who bring us homemade treats, volunteer to shovel our sidewalks or mow the lawn, weed our flower beds, pick up litter and plant flowers in the community square. Also to those who perform as one of the characters in our annual community haunted house, donate to our after-school Teen Zone program and our summer reading program, entertain for no charge at our Music in the Square events or for special programs in the community center, and to all who have donated their

time and/or funds to the library over the years. I truly do have a lot to be thankful for, and I look forward to seeing the changes in the next 20 years here at our Gillett Library and in our Gillett area community.

Another "hat" that I wear is as a coordinator of the Barn Quilts of Oconto County project, and I'm grateful to the many who work with us to make this project possible. Lynn Jones from New View Industries and I got this project off the ground in 2013, and we now have more than 60 barn quilts installed here in Oconto County.

Our barn quilts are painted at New View Industries in Gillett, which is an employment and training facility for individuals who are developmentally/physically disabled or who have other barriers to employment. The Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) is generously supporting this project by donating the use of their equipment for the installation of the blocks, and the OEC linemen are donating their time.

Our project has gotten both state and national

recognition, and we were featured in the October 2014 issue of Country magazine. For the past two years in the month of October, our barn quilts project worked with the Oconto County University of Wisconsin-Extension and Oconto County Tourism to coordinate a road rally based on our barn quilt trail. This project is truly a labor of love, and I'm rewarded every time I meet with farm owners to gather the history and background stories of their properties.

Lastly, I'm grateful to my family and friends who inspire me to do my best and who brace me back up whenever I need support. I'm grateful for my love of gardening and quilting, which rejuvenate me and keep me focused as I prepare for the week ahead. "Hem your blessings with thankfulness so they don't unravel," (author unknown) and always be grateful for what you have every day ... I know that I will. Happy Thanksgiving and may your home be filled with joy and the warmth of family this holiday season.

DECEMBER



- The TEEN ZONE kids made our library's Christmas tree again this year out of books, and it looks great!
- We participated in CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK and provided a Photo Op booth and craft activities. It was a successful event with horse-drawn wagon rides, many crafters/vendors that set up at St. John's church, and fun activities for families in the park including the park lighting and fireworks.
- We have our **Mailbox to the North Pole** set up during the month of December so that kids can mail their letter to Santa, and we supply the response back from the big guy 😊
- Our library coordinates the **HOLIDAY WREATH HUNT** in Gillett and this is the 12th year that it has taken place. 29 businesses are participating and I've received many donations to use as rewards for the "hunters". It's a fun way for families to get out and enjoy the holidays together as they travel around town in search of the answers.
- We'll have several activities here during Christmas week when the kids are off from school. Cathie donated a TV so we can now show movies on some days.
- Once the weather cooperates, we'll create the ice rink in the Square. Temps need to be -10 or colder before the ice can be formed, so it may not be ready until mid-January this winter. We held a contest this December, and the best guess for when we start Skating in the Square wins a skating party there!

