

10/31/2016

Dear Select Board,

All of us at the library can't thank you enough for all your encouragement and support over the past year.

Thanks to you we've now got six new computers – which has thrilled both us and the Swanton public – as well as an upgraded electrical system (wall outlets!) and, with the help of a donation from Gordon and Debbie Winters, a new waterproof floor in the Community Room and lower-floor hallway.

Just to catch you up on what's new over the past year:

- From January through May, we offered a really ambitious series of programs funded by a Curiosity Creates grant from the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). This included week-long animation and steampunk art camps, a reader's theater program, workshops on art journaling, mask-making, recycled robots, marble runs, cardboard pinball machines, and cardboard-box architecture, a snack-and-paint program for kids, nature-based science-and-art presentations by Kurt Valenta, and a visit from a Beatrix Potter re-enactor (with rabbit).

Several of these were so popular that we've continued them. Reader's theater, for example – in which kids read books and then put on a book-based play – is now a weekly after-school activity in the children's room.

- We hosted a Harry Potter Night in February that was such a hit that we've decided to make it an annual featured event. (Coming up in 2017 on February 1.)
- A book club for seniors, started at the School Apartments with the help of Sandy Kilburn, is going strong.
- We now have a television show, "Books and Beyond," filmed at the public library, that airs on Channel 15.
- This spring and summer, we established a kid's gardening club and planted a pollinator garden around the bandstand in the park. (Did you all see Michelle's sunflowers?)
- We introduced a summer campfire storytelling program, held in the roundhouse circle at the Depot Museum.

- We sponsored a very successful summer reading program on the theme of “On Your Mark! Get Set! Read!” – finishing up with a great celebration in the library and in the park.
- We provided a summer free lunch program for area kids ages 0-18.
- With the help of volunteers, our book sale was bigger and better than ever – and we hope to keep it growing. If any of you have suggestions for book storage places, we’d appreciate it. (The library is *full*.)
- We supported the Swanton Historical Society in hosting genealogy workshops and other local history programs.
- We held multiple popular workshops for both adults and children on fairy gardens and book art. In collaboration with the Swanton Arts Council, we also hosted a terrific town-wide Sidewalk Chalk Day, with participation by people of all ages.
- Adult programs also included a hugely popular visit from Dustin Pari, the Paranormal Rockstar; a presentation by an Agatha Christie re-enactor from the Vermont Humanities Council; a talk by Ameriquebecois author Jean-John Ofrias; and a comics and cartooning workshop from the Vermont Center for Cartoon Studies.
- Funded by a \$1000 grant from the Vermont Humanities Council, 30 kids attended Becky Rupp’s week-long Summer History Camp, this year held at the library with the life-saving support of the library staff.
- The library also participated in Swanton’s first year of NOTCH Camp, a two-week day camp sponsored by the Northern Tier Center for Health. We provided two weeks of daily science activities (Becky) and a fairy-garden program (Michelle) for 25-30 kids.
- We’ve started an active Swanton Writer’s Group.
- We’re participating in the Thursday Extension program at the Swanton Central School, providing hands-on science and art activities for kids.
- We provide meeting space and support for many community groups, including the Historical Society, the Enhancement Project and its task forces, the Arts Council, the Chamber of Commerce, homeschool groups, tutors, and DCF families and social workers.

- This spring we received a \$2500 grant from the Vermont Community Fund to establish a library Makerspace, designed to provide creative materials and opportunities for artists and inventors of all ages. This is being put in place in collaboration with the Swanton Arts Council and with the help of the Teen Center.
- Halloween in the Park at the Library was awesome – we had a least 300 people (we lost count) for pumpkin-and-ghost photos, balloon animals, Halloween movies, and the library’s free trick-or-treat for books give-away.
- Over the next two months, we’ll be doing an all-ages Christmas crafts workshop, a Great Christmas Read, a tree-decorating party, and a Night Before Christmas pajama party.
- So far, looking ahead to 2017, we’ve applied for a TEI Landmark Audio grant and a grant from the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation. We also plan to apply for another Vermont Humanities Council grant to fund History Camp 2017 and are looking into other grant opportunities.

And, as always, we’re back again asking for more money.

Our biggest concern this year is employee salaries and benefits. This past year we lost a talented library assistant, which was a blow, and we’ve had a lot of disappointed response about this from patrons. The problem is that we can’t attract or keep high-quality people if we’re offering them the sort of hourly wage that people pay their teen-age babysitters. We’d really like to boost our part-time people’s hourly wages and we’d like to offer Danielle, our children’s librarian, a full-time position.

We know this is asking a lot – and we know you’re not sitting on a hoard of gold bricks. However, we believe that keeping good librarians is important for the community. So we’d like to turn this last over to the town and run Danielle’s salary and benefits request as a line item on the upcoming ballot.

Again, many thanks for all you’ve done for us.

We’re counting on each of you to buy one of our future fund-raising library T-shirts.

Very best to all,

Rebecca Rupp  
Chair, Library Board of Trustees