

BROWNELL LIBRARY REPORT

By Penelope D. Pillsbury, Library Director

The Brownell Library is a municipal library that provides a current and diverse collection for all ages in a welcoming and comfortable environment where people come first. The staff's mission is to help patrons utilize the library's resources and to provide opportunities for community enrichment and cultural awareness.

Programming - We offered an eclectic mix this year. The Vermont Humanities Council's First Wednesday programs in Chittenden County were sponsored locally by the Brownell Library Foundation, Friends of Brownell and Kolvoord, Overton & Wilson P.C. Large audiences arrived from all up and down the Champlain Valley. Public Access Channel 16 RETN partnered with us, training staff and teens to film programs. First Friday concerts, inspired by the donation of a baby grand piano by Floyd and Vonetta Lapidow, started in October. Four self-published Vermont authors who came for an evening told of their writing experience and enjoyed meeting each other. Volunteer Ed Cashman has led two seasons of Dine & Discuss potluck book groups at the library. Good food, good discussion.

Dungeons and Dragons, Magic The Gathering, the Page Traveler Club and Star Wars Club attracted many new patrons young and not so young. Youth librarians participated in Vermont Early Literacy Institute and now incorporate math skills in story time. 281 kids and 100 teens read 4494 books during the Summer Reading Program. 117 children's programs and 38 teen programs kept young people engaged with our "Dream Big" and "Own the Night" summer themes. Teens and middle schoolers actively enjoyed planning some of the youth programming

Challenges - Faced with more homeless and demanding people at Brownell, we facilitated several community stakeholders' meetings and achieved a deeper awareness how to seek

services in our town and what services exist in Burlington. The library spearheaded real education for members of the churches, libraries, mental health professionals and teen services. We now have resource lists to share with those in need.

Collaboration - Ensuring enthusiasm for libraries, our Youth staff visited elementary and middle schools presenting improvisational theater programs and collaborated with the librarians for a teen reading buddies program. Brownell's Teen Advisory Board developed a presentation for youth librarians for the entire state. The Young Adult librarian served on a high school Diversity Task force formed after a bullying incident. Brownell and Essex Free Library collaborated on a Readers Theater performance of "Bull Run", the Vermont Reads 2012 title, formed with a cast from the Village and the Town, played to a full house at Memorial Hall. They also lead a discussion of "The Hunger Games" at Essex Free Library.

We negotiated with SCOOP, a purchasing collective for libraries in Maine and New Hampshire, so member libraries of our Green Mountain Library Consortium could benefit from large supply discounts and free shipping from participating vendors.

With postal costs increasing, we joined six other Chittenden Co. libraries to establish a Courier Service between libraries, in concert with volunteers from the Howard Center. With a shared VOKAL Catalog we can easily see what many other libraries have available for loan.

Library staff members served as facilitators for many neighborhood conversations for Heart & Soul grant. Friends of Brownell offered books for the Little Free Library Project. We help coordinate the Railroad Ave Recess Committee. Brownell was Grand Central for the 4th Annual Train Hop that attracted over 1700 people. Trustees and staff were on hand to

punch tickets, serve refreshments and direct “hoppers.”

Technology - Staff are leaders on the Implementation and Circulation Teams for the VOKAL consortium ILS system which has grown to include 36 Libraries and 45,596 active patrons. It makes access to 757,548 items much easier. We cut the size of the print reference collection in half, since the Vermont Online Database and other electronic resources are now available. This provided growth space for books, which citizens are still reading in large numbers: 165,793 items circulated, 1% increase over last year.

With our re-launched Facebook Page and weekly Front Porch Forum postings, patrons are reminded about Brownell’s offerings many times a week.

With the installation of receipt printers at the circulation desks, staff offers borrowers a recyclable receipt of their materials instead of stamping date due slips now. We no longer need to buy ink pads, stamps or slips. Many patrons refuse the receipt, due to emailed “books due” reminders. Our website now features an online calendar we can update

easily. Staff is learning how to manage their work lives on iPads, with access to the Internet, online calendars, office apps, a camera, downloadable books and much more.

Staffing - Brownell volunteers put in approximately 3588 hours in 2012. Donna Canniff became the Adult Circulation Assistant when Martha Penzer resigned to care for her mother. Donna’s position was filled by Viki Kramer. Margaret Turvey and Sarah Sturm began as shelvees for our thousands of books. Erna Deutsch, from the Youth Library, and Donna Canniff now both aid in cataloging our materials in Tech Services.

The Future Begins Right Now - Library staff, Foundation and Trustees participated in the community-wide Heart & Soul neighborhood planning conversations in 2012. The library’s next Long Range Plan will be guided by the abundant feedback from the Heart & Soul grant. In 2013 the staff intends to become comfortable with Google Calendars for all our needs. We will be applying for grants to upgrade our technological offerings. The music CD collection will be reorganized into clearer genres.



Brownell Library staff: left to right in back- Viki Kramer, Nellie Zansler, Wendy Johnson, Mary Graf, Erna Deutsch, Wendy Hysko, Donna Canniff, Susan Pierce. Left to right in front: Penny Pillsbury, Kat Redniss, Alison Pierce. Missing - Sarah Sturm & Margaret Turvey.