

County Support is Vital to Library Project

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What happens at the main library in Judith Basin County affects what happens in the county as a whole. That is why the library staff, the library board, and the committees formed for the library expansion project hope for the support of the entire county as this project goes forward. Everybody wins when the relationship between the main library and the branch library in Hobson and the main library and the station library in Geysers maintains a team spirit.

Library Director Jeanne Lillegard said the Hobson Library became a branch of the Judith Basin County Free Library in the fall of 2006. Since that time she and her assistant, Norma Zimmer, and Hobson librarian Jenni Hammontree have worked together as a team, and they want to continue serving the county. They are all very proud of what the branch library has become and that it is part of the library system.

"The Hobson Friends of the Library did a wonderful thing for their community," Lillegard said. "We are blessed to have them and appreciate what they have done for the county library."

They own the building in which the Hobson Library is located and pay the insurance and upkeep on the building. They are the ones who petitioned the commissioners for acceptance as a branch library.

Everyone involved in the library project hopes that same enthusiasm will be beneficial in helping to make the main library all that it can be.

As a branch library, Hobson is funded by the Judith Basin County Free Library budget. This budget includes around \$20,000 annually for the librarian and her substitutes. The salary includes half of the librarian's insurance as well as social security and retirement. The Hobson librarian job is a part-time position, 24 hours per week.

Additionally, the county library budget pays the phone bill, electricity, propane, Press subscription, Story Hour supplies and treats, and miscellaneous cleaning and bathroom supplies in Hobson. These costs average about \$5,000.

Hammontree receives a book budget of \$3,000 annually in order to purchase new books. She is also allowed \$1,100 per year for technology and tech support. Lillegard makes sure the various fees the library pays for services are paid annually as well. These include an Interlibrary Loan fee of \$800, a MontanaLibrary2Go fee of \$500, and a Shared Catalog fee of \$1,750.

About one-third of the library budget, \$32,000 annually, goes to the Hobson Branch Library. The funds the main library receives from the Strand Foundation and the Judith Basin Endowment Fund, as well as the Federation monies, all go to the good of the county. Library Board Member Carolyn Jette noted this coming year the Hobson Library will receive an additional \$1,500 for shelving.

The branch library also benefits from Lillegard's administrative duties and expertise, and the numbers speak for themselves. For example, in 2013 a combined total of 13,044 patrons visited the two libraries, in addition to the patrons who used the library through MontanaLibrary2Go. A combined total of 2,032 e-books, kindle, and audio books were checked out by Judith Basin County residents through this digital service.

The newest service at the library is the Montana Shared Catalog (MSC), which put both the main library and the branch library on the same library system. MSC allows all the county's patrons to access both libraries' catalogs.

"We cannot duplicate the collections," Lillegard said. "It would simply be too expensive."

MSC is particularly valuable for the people on the western side of the county, Geyser and Raynesford

"It's long been a worry to us to serve these patrons to the best of our ability," Lillegard said.

MSC makes it possible for these patrons to see what the libraries have and to place a hold on things. Librarians check their holds daily, and several people have offered their services for shuttling books to and from either the Geyser School, which serves as a central point at that end of the county, or to the area's station site at the Geyser Raynesford Senior Center.

Shortly after the program went live, Lillegard traveled to the county's schools to train the teachers in the use of MSC.

Teamwork has already made the Judith Basin County Free Library a valuable institution to county residents, but today a lack of space at the library has become a critical issue, as has the need for maintaining the library's relevancy in the 21st century. It is important the library meets the needs of the library patrons for the future. And that is why a building committee and a fund-raising committee are pursuing plans to build an addition.

The fund raising has begun with a Gift of Knowledge raffle that allows ticket holders six chances to win a \$500 prize. The first drawing is set for July 20 at the CMR Stampede Rodeo; no tickets will be sold after that date, but building committee chairman Carolyn Jette told the Press last week this raffle offers only the first run of prizes; next year new businesses will be involved.

The fund-raising committee is currently working on an event for Friday, July 18. It is being called "A Bite of the Judith" and will take place on the courthouse lawn on Friday, July 18. Schematic designs and a 3-D model created by Slate Architecture and their team will be available for public viewing at this event. Look for more information as it is shared.

Phase 2 of the project, construction, will not take place until the money is available, and that is why both project committees hope everyone in the county will lend their support to this project.