

REPORT OF THE AVON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
VIRGINIA VOCELLI, *Library Director*

The long-awaited expansion and renovation of Avon's public library began officially in January with the arrival of the bulldozers and the ground-breaking ceremony. In April over 300 residents celebrated the progress of the construction by signing a beam that will play an important part in the new space. Throughout the summer work continued on the addition while Avon staff provided library services in the "old part."

The construction project has inspired the generosity of our loyal Avon residents. In October, the Avon Library Capital Campaign was launched at Hoffman Motors. Since then, Avon residents have responded to town-wide mailings and a commemorative brick program and have been generous in their contributions and pledges to the campaign. These funds will be used to support enhancements to the building in technology, furniture, self-check-out stations, programming and collection development, items not included in the town project budget.

This past year can be divided into *before* construction and *during* construction. Before construction, the library offered a wide variety of programs for adults, including: Decorating Expertise by Nassau, How to Market Your Company to the Mature Market of 55+, a Style Swap, Blackjack night, a Poetry evening, yoga, Travels in India, and Note by Note: the Making of Steinway. During construction we have continued with the Thursday film matinees by holding them at the Senior Center and the scholar-led book discussions. We hosted the VITA tax program offering volunteer tax assistance on 193 returns.

You may have seen Children's Services out in the community this year as they participated in many new outreach opportunities. Librarians visited the local area child care centers for monthly storytime, and added evening and Saturday sessions. A variety of book clubs bring in many excited readers. Programs like the Annual Princess Party, Pirate Storytime, Creative Art Experiences, and Bring Your Own Snack Storytime, all funded by the Mitnick Trust and the Friends of the Library, were big hits of the year. The annual Summer Reading Club, sponsored by the Farmington Bank Foundation, registered over 500 participants! Student volunteers provided a total of 20-30 hours of work per week.

Young Adult services grew to an all-time high with the implementation of "Teen Friday," offering events ranging from cooking to technology to crafting. The Young Adult collection has grown extensively this year, including more DVD's, graphic novels and audiobooks. A Hartford Foundation for Public Giving "Library Impact Grant" helped implement 5 new iMac workstations filled with great multimedia software. This same grant made it possible to add 3 AWE Early Literacy Workstations in the Children's Room, plus numerous training workshops for adults.

Adult Services have been just as dynamic. Librarians Patrice Celli and Tina Panik have been awarded two grants from the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The first grant will sponsor "Let's Talk About It: Making Sense of the American Civil War." The second grant funds a traveling exhibit titled, "Lincoln: the Constitution and the Civil War."

The economy continues to impact Avon residents. The reference department has been busy helping patrons use the Internet to find and apply for jobs, file their taxes, and communicate via email and social networking. The Reference Department also helped promote the Friends Author Luncheon in October, welcoming Connecticut author Amy Bloom. Twenty-two local book groups are registered with the library. We continue to offer our Homebound Service and regularly send large print books to area convalescent homes. The Adult Summer Reading program was as popular as ever.

Due to the increase in demand for eBooks and downloadable audiobooks (demand of which has increased by 15%), more and more libraries within our CONNECT consortium have implemented the service, increasing the number of titles available to our patrons. The library also purchased an Apple iPad for patrons to use in the library. Universal Class was offered to our residents, an online service which offers over 500 courses on topics ranging from knitting to Microsoft Excel. As of August 1, 2011, 248 people registered, have enrolled in 220 classes, and completed 529 lessons. Another new popular online service is Byki languages, which offers instruction on 70 languages.

This year we said goodbye to Donna Miller, our long-time Assistant Director. Donna has moved on to become Director of the Newington Library. Departmental Managers Amber Lansing, Tina Panik, Alice Pentz, and Julie Styles have stepped up their roles and responsibilities to help maintain the great services, collections, and programming the Avon Library is known for.

Library volunteers are relied upon more and more. In addition to all the wonderful day-to-day work they do for us, our volunteers and Friends provide a great deal of morale-boosting kindness, support, and laughter as we face the challenges of building a new library.

In spite of the challenges of using the library during construction, the schedule changes, varied hour and minimal programming, Avon residents have continued to use their public library. We thank them for their patience and understanding as we all recognize that this time next year, we will have opened a wonderful, state of the art, and spacious new library.