

REPORT OF THE AVON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
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2008-2009

In these challenging economic times, the Avon Free Public Library proved to be more valuable and relevant to children, adults, and families of Avon than ever before. Although activity indicators are lower this year because of reduction in Sunday hours and the return of Simsbury residents to their new library, we **felt** an increase in library use! The Avon Library provided tools, programs and services for people of all ages 24/7, either in-house or virtually through our website, www.avonctlibrary.info.

Patrons told us they could not afford their Internet connections at home, and came to use the library's Internet computers instead. They told us they weren't buying as many books, CDs and DVDs, but checked them out at the library. Tighter budgets prompted a larger attendance at our free programs. Residents took advantage of practical topic programs such as home buying and selling, reducing taxable income, and managing finances for college-age students. They used the library as an office when they lost their jobs, using the job searching resources and computers to update their resumes.

Other programs for adults covered genealogy, gardening, technology such as digital TV conversion and digital photography, yoga, antiques, two book discussion series, the fabrics of India and Indian festivals, plus a special holiday chocolate event! The library worked with the Avon Land Trust on their "unplugged learning project." With other public libraries in the Farmington Valley, Avon participated in another successful "One Book" event featuring "Waiting for Snow in Havana" and a personal appearance by author Carlos Eire. We wrote and received grants from the Avon Education Foundation and the Wattis Foundation, for a community wide reading event planned for in October 2009. Several adult programs were co-sponsored with the Avon Senior Center. Adults enjoyed a summer reading club of their own for the fifth year in a row; the reference staff established a new service for local book clubs which assists seventeen local groups obtain copies of their reading choices as well as news of local author appearances. Author Elinor Lipman spoke at the Friends first Author Luncheon at the Golf Club of Avon in October.

In **Children's Services**, story times for ages 12 months to 5 years continued to be in great demand, with attendance holding fast to impressive numbers as the staff incorporated emerging pre-school developmental ideas and trends. Book discussions for grades 1 – 8 continued to draw serious readers; special programs such as Lars the Polar Bear, DB & Bogus and the story of Pinocchio acted in theater format and funded by the Friends and the Mitnick Trust were highly attended. The annual summer reading program, sponsored by the Farmington Savings Bank, enjoyed high participation and enthusiasm. Student volunteerism became a privilege with over 40 enthusiasts being mentored and supervised by the staff at the rate of about 25 – 30 hours per week year-round. Collaboration with the schools on shared needs and special projects continued to benefit our town's youth.

Young Adult services rocked with more teens and pre-teens participating in unique and creative library activities and events, planned by Amber Lansing. The Teen Advisory Board, originally a small group of book selection advisors, has evolved into an action committee that generates exciting and varied programming for grades 7 - 12, volunteering opportunities, book discussion groups, and much more. For years, young adult or teen book circulation was the most steadily increasing format other than DVDs, thus reinforcing that teens have a devotion to the library on many levels.

Space issues continue to plague the library bursting at the seams. In order to make the collection more reflective of our community's needs and to relieve the overcrowding on the shelves, the Library undertook a comprehensive collection evaluation. Librarians and staff examined the collection area-by-area, for accuracy, relevancy, condition of materials and frequency of patron use. As needed, items were replaced or removed from the collection. This project allowed the Library to determine which areas needed attention during the book selection process and to free up space. So far, 4,573 print items and 1,196 non-print items were deleted from the collection. With the help of volunteer Barbara Leonard, the library took advantage of a program called Better World Books. BWB buys our discarded books and sells them, raising funds to promote literacy worldwide. Unsold books are recycled.

Volunteers are a part of every department with duties ranging from processing library materials books, delivering books to the homebound, assisting with programs, answering the telephone, maintaining the flower beds, staffing the Marian Hunter History Room and providing assistance through the VITA Tax Program. The Friends of the Avon Library provided volunteer and financial support in sponsoring special programming for children and adults, the summer intern, member newsletter and the annual book sale, the profits of which benefit the library.

While providing needed programs and services for the community, the staff has worked with the Library Building Committee, accompanying them as they made presentations to local clubs and organizations. The submittal of an application to the State Library resulted in a \$1 million dollar Public Library Construction grant. As the community waits for the library's expansion and renovation to go forward, this report verifies that the library is a vital and active center of the community.