

AVON LIBRARY & UCONN HEALTH CENTER PARTNERING TO SUPPORT HEALTH REFERENCE AREA AND PROGRAMS

The Avon Free Public Library is partnering with the UCONN Health Center to sponsor a health and medical reference zone and a series of medical, health and wellness seminars at the library. The Avon Library Board of Directors and its capital campaign committee have exceeded the goal to raise \$1 million to expand and renovate the library and add new services for the community.

The fundraising campaign has been underway for almost two years, said Mary LaBelle Suter, president of the Avon Library Board of Directors. Construction of the \$8.7 million project began last December and is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2012.

“We are extremely grateful to be collaborating with the UCONN Health Center, as it will allow the library staff to provide the community with a quality health and medical reference area, as well as future programs on a variety of health-related topics,” said Suter.

“Our patrons are very interested in conducting their own research on health and medical topics, so it is important to be able to provide them with cost-free resources and data bases,” said Library Director Virginia Vocelli. The Health and Medical Reference Area will have a desk top designed for easy access to the materials and data bases housed there, and library professionals will be trained to help patrons find what they are looking for. “We also expect a great deal of interest in the programs UCONN Health Center will sponsor after the completed library reopens,” said Vocelli.

The library expansion project includes a two-story addition on the south and west sides of the building. The project will also include an expanded children’s area, additional computer access and capabilities that include more hard-wired work stations and wireless connections, a 50 percent increase in the size of the community room, individual conference rooms and an expanded Avon History Room. The site around the library will be reconfigured to accommodate 111 parking spaces (an increase of 52) and a drive-up book drop.

Major funding for the project comes from the Town of Avon, the State of Connecticut, the Library Board of Trustees and the Friends of the Avon Library, and hundreds of donors, foundations and trusts. The first \$500,000 of funds raised has been committed to the Town of Avon, in order to contribute to the cost of the project, said Mark Nolan, chairman of the Capital Campaign Committee. Additional capital campaign funds will be used to support enhancements to the building in technology, furniture, lighting, signage, electronic bulletin boards, self-check-out stations, programming and collection development. Nolan also emphasized that the fundraising effort will continue through the completion of the project, in order to equip the library with these enhancements and to endow a fund to support future needs.

The Avon Library was built in 1982 and renovated in 1997, but current space has been inadequate for more than 10 years to meet the demands by patrons, based upon a study conducted in conformance with standards set by the Connecticut State Library. More than half of Avon residents hold library cards and the library records more than 200,000 visits annually. For more information about the library, visit www.avonctlibrary.info.

The University of Connecticut Health Center includes the schools of medicine and dental medicine, the UConn Medical Group, University Dentists, and John Dempsey Hospital. Founded in 1961, the Health Center pursues a mission of providing outstanding health care education in an environment of exemplary patient care, research and public service. More information about the UConn Health Center is available at www.uhc.edu.

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