

Kate Lasky leads county libraries into a new era

By
Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Senior Contributing Writer

Keeping the county's libraries open and leading ongoing fundraising efforts in 2015 are the biggest challenges faced by Kate Lasky, Josephine Community Libraries Executive Director. Last year's effort received a nice year-end boost, meeting a \$150,000 fundraising goal.

"Now that we're a privately run nonprofit library system, we rely heavily on donations and a large volunteer force to staff our operations and programs," Lasky said.

Libraries serve the entire community demographic - from toddlers to elders.

"Libraries provide access to information in all its forms. Technology is changing so fast and as we enter the digital age, it's difficult for some, especially seniors, to keep up with all

the different ways we share information now," Lasky said.

In addition to offering a bank of computers during normal library hours, the Illinois Valley library provides free Wi-Fi access: seven-days-a-week, around the clock. Many people sit in the library's parking lot when the facility is closed.

"Not everyone has the same access to new technology, so libraries continue to serve as the great equalizer," Lasky said. "This is vital to the economy and well-being of our communities. Access to information is the foundation of democracy."

Though even with new technology, reading from "real books" is not any less popular, Lasky explained, adding that "many families on tight budgets cannot always afford to buy books to feed their children's voracious appetites."

In 2015, the library is partnering with the statewide Early Learning Hub coalition, which

supports childhood literacy with its "Story-time Everyday Everywhere" program.

"To participate in Josephine County, we're using a donation from Charles Seagraves, who won a \$10,000 grant from the 4-Way Community Foundation to donate to the nonprofit organization of his choice," Lasky said. "It's very exciting that he chose the Libraries Children Services!"

"Little children who become comfortable with the written word better develop the critical skills they'll need in school, in college and in life," Lasky said. "The most formative years are from birth to 3-years-old, and there's just no other outside resources to ensure this crucial literacy at that level. Not all children attend daycare, where some of these skills might be learned. So we want to help parents ensure that every child has access to these resources."



Kate Lasky

Graves looks forward to 2015

By
Judy Hoyle
IVN Contributing Writer

Larry Graves is the manager for both of Josephine County's airports.

What is your biggest challenge for 2015?

"I think I have several, ranging from getting a better instrument approach designed and installed for Grants Pass Airport (which will really enhance the airport's safety and utility), to increasing the marketing exposure and attendance at the annual Smokejumpers' Moon-Tree-Run and Firefighters'-Fair this coming June at the Illinois Valley Airport. Probably the biggest challenge though, will be the mindful integration of the new UAV Technology and Operations Center into the IV Airport Industrial Park and the general IV region."

What is new for 2015?

"The new Commercial UAV Technology and Operations Center coming to the IV Airport Industrial Park."

What do you want to accomplish for 2015?

"I want to assure that all interested groups, individuals and all the many federal, state, regional and local regulatory agencies that have an interest at some level in the development of the IV Industrial Park are kept fully informed and have adequate time to voice their concerns and influence the outcome of this exciting new opportunity. I view my job as the Manager of Josephine County's two airports as including the encouragement of clean industry that has the potential of bringing in many, many family-supporting jobs to the area."

What policy changes do you see making in 2015?

"I think all of our important policies are working well and I don't anticipate making any major changes in the coming year. My policy is to communicate well, anticipate change and move quickly to solve problems wherever possible."

Dwyer remarks on school board issues

By
Judy Hoyle
IVN Contributing Writer

Illinois Valley resident Kate Dwyer has served on the Three Rivers School District (TRSD) board of directors for almost two years.

What is your biggest challenge for 2015?

"The biggest challenge for the school board is securing adequate state funding. One area of serious inequity is the formula used to reimburse our district for transportation costs. We cover so many miles each day that bussing costs are crippling. The state does not address this in its repayment schedule. Fixing this could put a lot more of our budget into classrooms, and it requires an adjustment at the legislative level."

**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR!**

"Additional challenges include:

"Communication: keeping parents and stakeholders in the loop. A big value, but can be hard to achieve.

"Engagement: Inviting parents, businesses, and community members to volunteer in classrooms and other school support.

"Overcoming Isolation: Unlike Grants Pass, we can't centralize services. Our students are too far away from each other. Long-distance classes are, so far, not a big win. Perhaps the tech will catch up, so we should keep trying. Providing the broadest possible range of classes and services in spite of this difficulty will require creative thinking. Ideas are always welcome!"

"What is new for 2015?"
"This school year is the first without furlough

(budget cut) days in many years. This reflects both increased state funding and careful management. We hope additional funding might allow for high priority items, like smaller class sizes.

"I'm looking forward to a full year with TRSD's new Superintendent, Dave Holmes. So far I'm impressed, and I'm eager to see what he can do as he settles in."

What do you want to accomplish for 2015?

"I'm always looking to reduce class sizes, especially in second-grade classrooms, because that is such a crucial year. But we also have class size crises in other grades.

"Increasing STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) will help more graduates be job-ready or college-ready.

"Certified teacher-librarians are effective for

teacher and student support. I'd like to see those positions restored; begin with a district wide librarian to develop a program. Students and staff need to learn how to use digital research resources. Increasing students' information literacy gives them tools to be lifelong learners."

What policy changes do you see making in 2015?

"Policies are tools to codify and support what works, and enforce guidelines of a shared vision. Changes will be made as new initiatives develop, and new laws come into play. Policies are living documents, and should be subject to a near-constant rotating process of review and update. This can be tiring work, but stale policies are not helpful to our staff."



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