

Manzanita celebrates its 'library of the future'

After an extensive renovation, the North Tillamook Library will hold a Grand Reopening celebration March 12

The value of a public library goes beyond shelves full of books and banks of computers. Residents of smaller North Coast communities rely on libraries as hubs to gather and learn, explore, interact and imagine.

To ensure that it would continue to be a hub for the area it serves — Manzanita, Nehalem and Wheeler — North Tillamook Library in Manzanita recently underwent an extensive renovation. With a Grand Re-opening Celebration set for Saturday, March 12, North Tillamook Library patrons are eager for their “library of the future.”

The Manzanita branch of the Tillamook Library System opened in 1987. Nearly 30 years later, the building had become a bit dog-eared, not unlike many of the books lining its shelves: worn furniture, old carpeting, outdated heaters, limited technology.

In addition, the entire west corner of the building needed leveling after settling about three inches.

North Tillamook Library Friends, an all-volunteer organization that owns and maintains the building, realized that a few cosmetic fixes wouldn't suffice if the library was going to last another 30 years.

“It really kicked off in 2014 when we participated in the Library Of The Future Project,” says Kay Stepp, board president of the North Tillamook Library Friends.

The project, run by Tillamook County Library, was a study that discussed what libraries are becoming and how communities are developing them.

“We realized that libraries were becoming more than just a repository for books,” Stepp says, adding that it had become apparent that the digital world was coming to libraries.

“People come to the library with their devices to work, study and research,” she says.

Besides gearing up for increased demand for technology, the library also wanted to enhance its ability to offer a variety of educational programs.



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The renovation of the North Tillamook Library in Manzanita will culminate in a Grand Reopening celebration at 3 p.m. Saturday, March 12.



Submitted photo

Much of North Tillamook Library's furniture, fixtures and lighting hadn't been replaced since the building opened in 1987.

With these things in mind, renovating and modernizing the building dovetailed into one project.

The project to-do list was extensive, and, luckily, the Library Friends had received a \$50,000 bequest from the estate of Linda Anne Easley, a part-time Manzanita resident and former Multnomah County librarian.

“It was a spark-plug; it told us ‘we can do this,’” Stepp says.

The bequest allowed the Library Friends



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Volunteers removed nearly 10,000 books from North Tillamook Library in preparation for the extensive remodel.



Photo by Dan Haag

New furniture and lighting lend a comfortable feel to the North Tillamook Library in Manzanita.

to attract grants from the Oregon Cultural Trust, Ford Family Foundation, and Samuel S. Johnson Foundation, as well as donations from community members.

The project got underway in early January with volunteers removing 10,000 books. Fresh paint brightened the interior, along with new carpeting, furniture, bookshelves, USB ports, computer stations, and eco-friendly lighting.

A large screen television was installed

to stream educational programming, and a meeting room was reconfigured to accommodate 50 people.

“We envision the room being a really active place for programs,” Stepp says.

One program on the horizon is what Stepp calls a “technology lab” where patrons can bring in their electronic devices and receive instruction on their use.

‘We have taken a big step in making a very technology-friendly library.’

Even with the unpredictable nature of remodeling, the project was on time and within the budget.

“So many wonderful people came out and made contributions to keep the project going,” Stepp says.

That included board member Lee Hiltenbrand, who served as general contractor for the project.

“Lee donated his time as general contractor, something that allowed us to do more in terms of investing in the facility,” Stepp says, calling Hiltenbrand “volunteer supreme.”

Beginning at 3 p.m. March 12, the grand opening celebration will be an opportunity for library friends and patrons to gather, share refreshments, listen to guest speakers, and admire the facility.

In a nod to Easley, who played the fiddle and often invited other fiddlers to her Manzanita home, eight fiddlers will perform at the celebration.

“She was a member of the Oregon Old-Time Fiddlers, her other passion in addition to libraries,” Stepp says of Easley.

As the project draws to a close and the re-opening approaches, Stepp is proud of how so many people pulled together to realize a shared vision.

“We have taken a big step in making a very technology-friendly library,” she says. “This is going to be a place where people can gather and learn together for now and for the future.”

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