

Library looks to the future as it celebrates 90th birthday

Private library supported by 80 volunteers

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

The original Cannon Beach Library had 54 books sitting on three shelves at what used to be a grocery store on Hemlock Street.

Ninety years later, the library now fills its own building with more than 14,000 books. It has seen a number of location changes and technological advances since 1927. But for nine decades its legacy as a private, almost solely volunteer-driven library has remained.

The Cannon Beach Library board is hosting its 90th birthday party Oct. 21 as a way to thank the community for decades of support. People are invited to dress as their favorite literary character and enjoy a buffet of snacks from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the library.

“(The library) has been a community effort from the

beginning, starting with community dances and chicken dinner fundraisers,” said Phyllis Bernt, co-president of the library board. “We are here to serve the needs of the community.”

Unlike most libraries, Cannon Beach has never been public. It was established by the Cannon Beach Civic Club — a group of eight women who worked on civic needs such as street lighting, garbage disposal, public restrooms and, eventually, the library.

Through donations and hundreds of volunteer hours, the library was able to move into a small cottage on Second Street in 1945 before settling in the Hemlock location in 1972.

While the civic club that started the library no longer exists, its spirit of public service has remained. There is one paid position at the library. Otherwise, day-to-day tasks like running the front desk, book collection and inventory, maintenance and fundraising are done by more than 80 volunteers, who each year donate 9,000 hours of



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jay Schwehr in 1976 moving books to the new building using the “Library on the Move” cart.

their time, Bernt said.

Running as a nonprofit rather than a public institution has its share of challenges and benefits. Collecting books and movies to rent is relatively easy — the library receives about 10,000 book donations a year. But it takes about \$83,000 a year to op-

erate, with only \$16,000 of that funding coming from the city.

It’s not always easy to find enough volunteers to help organize programs and fundraisers to keep the library running. Tasks like general building maintenance and janitorial work are shared

between everyone. But for library board member Sandi Lundy, it is worth it.

“We take a lot of pride in making this library the center of the community,” Lundy said. “There are so many moving parts to it, but it’s fun to bond with the other volunteers. There’s a sense of pride

in keeping (the library) perfect.”

Lynne Murray, another library board member, said part of what she thinks has made the library thrive for as long as it has is not just the number of volunteers, but the type. “We have a large number of resources in Cannon Beach. We have people move here who were former children’s librarians, people who worked in finance, people who worked in real estate, and they donate their expertise and do it for free,” Murray said. “Everyone brings something different to the table to help this run.”

The goal for the next 90 years is continue to figure out what resources people need from a library and find ways to fund it, Bernt said. But for now, she wants the party to press pause on the hectic day-to-day library routine to thank volunteers and supporters.

And for those who are on the fence about coming, the board offers an incentive.

“We’re giving amnesty for overdue book fees, one day only,” Lundy said. “You can’t miss it: We only do it every 90 years.”

Counties seek sustainable tourism

Tourism from Page 1A

“The city (of Cannon Beach) asked for an ecotourism strategy in their strategic plan,” Melissa Keyser, the program coordinator for the Haystack Rock Awareness Program, said. “It’s everyone’s job to protect this area. We all have positive ideas, but how do we make it happen?”

Sustainability

At places like Fort Stevens State Park, Oregon State Parks North Coast District Manager Teri Wing sees the impact of the booming tourism industry almost every day.

Wing has been with the parks system for more than 30 years and said it’s almost hard to describe the influx of travelers. At Fort Stevens, people book RV spots nine months in advance, and for most of the summer the park is at capacity with more than 5,000 visitors at once. Being constantly at capacity leads to more maintenance for staff, as well as an increase in people parking and camping alongside U.S. Highway 101 when the park is full, she said.

Overuse of certain parks and trails has led to erosion issues, as well. Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area in Pacific City has had to put up fencing and more signage to keep people out of actively eroding areas.

“When the understory (on the trail) isn’t allowed to heal, all you are going to have is mud,” Wing said. “Grass doesn’t grow back, so you end up with a lot of erosion. With how much use they get, we don’t have the infrastructure to fix them.”

Terms like ecotourism or sustainable tourism often make people think of traveling in an eco-friendly way, said Kristin Dahl, the vice president of destination development at Travel Oregon, who led Monday’s workshop.

But making tourism sustainable also means tackling local livability issues like affordable housing for service industry employees, having accessible public transit and representing cultural heritage.

For Jon Burpee, the superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, creating sustainable tourism



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

Spending by tourists in the region has increased from \$391 million in 2000 to \$779 million in 2016.

means developing affordable housing.

“It is hard to manage a park effectively when seasonal park rangers can’t find housing that’s affordable,” he said. “Sustainable tourism has to be a way to meet greater needs.”

Often when Dahl leads these workshops, she said communities are looking for ways to bring more people to their area. But the challenge for the North Coast will be learning how to manage the volume of tourists already coming, which could come in the form of asking them to visit different times of year other than summer and to try underutilized parks and attractions.

“It’s a good problem to have. Tourism is good for the economy,” Wing said. “We just want to lessen the pressure on these areas.”

A path to follow

Casey Roeder, the executive director at the Skamania

County Chamber of Commerce in Washington state, participated in the Columbia River Gorge tourism studio last year.

As the former president of the Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association, Roeder said the region faced similar issues to Clatsop and Tillamook counties. “We have very highly used areas that feel congestion — Multnomah Falls, Dog Mountain, et cetera. The same time of year we would have too many people,” Roeder said. “So we had to ask, ‘How do we disperse people to other areas that get less use?’”

Out of their tourism studio came the Columbia Express, a shuttle system that takes visitors to and from Multnomah Falls, which reduced traffic and parking challenges.

Another project funded by the grant was a 20-year plan to connect biking and hiking trails, as well as an itinerary of events that lined up with bus schedules to reduce vehicle use.

City manager finalists picked

Finalists from Page 1A

Greenwood served as general manager of the Port of Newport for the past three years until this summer. He resigned as general manager in July because recently elected port commissioners wanted a change in leadership, according to a press release from the port.

Steidel said Tuesday he feels confident in the abilities of all three candidates.

City staff and Jensen Strategies will work on forming community and local government administrator panels to evaluate finalists. Representatives will be chosen from the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, the hospitality industry, arts community, environmental groups and other



Kevin Greenwood



Peter M. Jankowski



Bruce St. Denis

locals to offer input, interim City Manager Jason Schermerhorn said.

The other panel will be made up of three other city managers and one special district manager. None have been chosen yet.

Those interested in meeting the finalists are invited to a community forum at 7 p.m. Nov. 6 at the Surfsand Resort.

Citizens are encouraged to submit their questions ahead of time to City Recorder Colleen Riggs, either in person or by email by the end of the day Oct. 31. The City Council plans to choose a preferred candidate by Nov. 8.

“I’m looking forward to seeing the different types of questions the community will ask,” Steidel said.

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