

Library shares results of successful 2013-14 fiscal year

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The Seaside Public Library finished fiscal year 2013-14 with a substantial increase in library visits, the acquisition of about \$32,000 in donations and grants and a continued focus on increasing library access for all children in Clatsop County, Library Director Esther Moberg reported at a Seaside Downtown Development Association meeting in March.

The highlights for the fiscal year, from July 2013 to June 2014, included a 49 percent increase in library visits; a 3 percent increase in library cardholders; a 60 percent increase in use of digital eBooks and audio books; and a 2 percent increase in total circulation. In addition, the library upgraded its WiFi and acquired a new server.

With an average of 215,800 annual patron visits, Seaside is well above the state average of 39,280. Seaside also has 163 library programs

per year, nine more than the state average. The library averages about three programs per week and attendance at the programs was 4,448 for 2013-14, Moberg said.

Of the materials circulated through year, DVDs were the most prominent, at 44 percent; adult fiction and magazines, music and other materials were the next highest categories at 22 and 16 percent, respectively. The library's collection grew from 47,307 items – including books, audio books, DVDs, videos, magazines and other materials – to 53,423 items.

In 2013-14, the library received about \$32,950 in funds and materials. The library was awarded a \$11,650.75 Library Services and Technology Act grant to purchase new materials; a \$9,625 Library Services and Technology Act grant for Rural Outreach in Clatsop County cards; along with \$11,000 in memorials and donations; and a projector and screen valued at \$680.

The Friends of the Li-

2013-14 at a glance

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- The library received about \$32,950 in funds and materials
- Thirty-one volunteers donated 1,676 hours to the library valued at \$37,790

brary and volunteers are core aspects of the library's success, according to Moberg. In 2013-14, 31 volunteers donated 1,676 hours to the library and provided services such as helping with programs and events, cleaning and arranging author visits. Their donated hours of work was valued at about \$37,790.

ROCC Program

For several years, the Seaside Public Library has been collaborating with the Astoria Public Library and the Warrenton Community Library on the Rural Outreach in Clatsop County children's program, which extends library services to out-of-town children who

don't have access to a tax-supported library. It is designed to overcome the geographic and socioeconomic barriers some children face to get library access.

The libraries, Moberg said, have found three areas of success by partnering on the program: library cards for all children in Clatsop County; courier services between the libraries and schools; and countywide summer reading initiatives.

Through the program, the group holds annual card drives in Warrenton, Jewell, Knappa, Seaside and Astoria. Children 18 and younger who live outside city limits or in the unincorporated parts of

the county can get an ROCC library card for free. Since former Seaside Library Director Reita Fackerell and Astoria Library Director Jane Tucker joined forces to start the program in 2009, the number of materials circulated has increased from 5,000 to 18,000. In the first year, 273 cards were issued to kids outside city limits; in 2013-14, 550 were issued.

Over the years, the program has gained partners, including Warrenton and Clatsop County in 2014. Several local businesses also support the program.

The program's countywide summer reading aspect encourages children to continue reading and learning throughout the summer.

"We feel this is supporting what the schools and teachers already are doing," Moberg said.

The libraries contract with an individual to oversee the program, liaison with school staff and people in the community, generate publicity,

organize summer reading and provide courier service. For the past two years, Suzanne Harold has been the contractor. Having a designated person to administer the program is "the core piece we see as the key for sustainability," Moberg said.

The Friends of the Library is set up as the program's fiscal agent, and people can donate to the ROCC program through the nonprofit. Eventually, Moberg said, the group hopes to set up a foundation specifically for the rural outreach program, which could be supported off the interest made by the foundation.

The libraries are working to establish an intergovernmental agreement between their respective communities. The group also is focusing on the program's sustainability.

"Bringing it to where the kids are, partnering with schools and partnering with community people to bring access to them is one of the key pieces we're going to continue to work on," Moberg said.

Thrift store owners focus on specialization, not competition

Thriffs from Page 1A

Hank Horlings, owner of Seaside Thrift Store on South Roosevelt Drive, agreed it likely has something to do with the economic recession, which has driven people to seek good deals. Thrift stores also tend to feature American-made and unique items, and give owners and customers alike the opportunity to up-cycle, refurbish or re-create used products.

He opened shop in the spring of last year with the intent to liquidate his inventory from several properties on the central coast near Waldport. Over the months, the store became self-perpetual, and he intends to continue establishing it.

Linda Iles-Martin, owner of Linda's Rag and Bone Thrift Shop, said she personally hasn't noticed any economic or social trends that could be

the impetus for the stores opening in 2014 in particular.

"This (past) summer, I was surprised to see so many thrift stores," she said last fall.

The key to success

Sometimes people have a dream of starting a thrift store without realizing the hard work necessary for its success.

"Having a second-hand store is like having a garage sale every single day of the week," Iles-Martin said. "I work really hard at it. So that's basically what my reward is: that I'm still in business."

Horlings agreed maintaining the thrift store and making it successful is primarily dependent on the work he puts into it, even when there are no customers. He didn't expect to break even for 2014.

"It takes about two years to establish a business before you determine if you're going to

make or break it," he said.

The manager at Seaside's STUFF, Dan Osborn, also has pragmatic expectations for the store, which opened in July 2014. The store is doing well, he said, but they're "not getting rich."

"We're just doing our own thing and doing the best we can," he said, adding they're "not out to crash" any of the other shops.

His sister, Valerie Watson, owns the store and his nephew, Tim Meyer, of Beaverton, is their buyer. The group has a warehouse in Beaverton where Meyer sells the high-end products he accumulates before transporting the rest of the stuff to be sold in the aptly named Seaside store.

Not all shops are here to stay. Courtney Cram purchased Thrifty Furniture on North Roosevelt Drive in November after the shop's own-

ers announced it was going out of business, as they were moving. Unwilling to see the business go, Cram bought the remaining inventory and kept the store open as the new owner. She gave the shop a new name, Timeless Treasures and Furnishings, and she tried to rebrand the store.

Not even a half a year later, though, a "For Lease" sign is sitting in the window of the building she used to occupy.

Tough competition?

The shop owners seemed unconcerned about the thick presence of thrift, vintage and antique stores in the area.

The shops don't compete with one another from a sales standpoint so much as through obtaining inventory, Iles-Mar-

tin said. With other businesses hitting up the same estate sales, garage sales and other venues to find cheap merchandise to re-sale, the chance of making a find that can turn a profit declines.

"Where I 'make' the money is when I buy stuff," Iles-Martin said.

Apart from that, each store has a slightly different feel than the others, and several are niche locations, specializing in music records, books, furniture or clothing.

Iles-Martin and her husband, Mike Martin, the store's co-owner, opened Linda's Rag and Bone No. 2 about five years ago to sell furniture, which couldn't be housed at the original shop. Her sons now run the business and focus

on furniture, video games and sporting goods.

The Spay & Neuter Thrift Shop is well established, in a good location and has a philanthropic cause, which combined help the store thrive, Barker said. Since the Helping Hands Thrift Store closed, it is the only nonprofit store.

"That may make a difference to some people," she said.

Horlings doesn't feel like the surplus of thrift shops and similar stores in Seaside and Gearhart is bad for business. If he doesn't have an item at his shop, he'll refer customers to other stores.

"Communities have to work together," he said. "As a merchant, you have to get to know your area and refer them to other sites."



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