

Library seeks donations before end of year

Paula Grubbs Eagle Staff Writer

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Charlotte Buchanan, 8, of Sarver and her mother, Rachel Buchanan, work on a craft project in the children's section at the South Butler Community Library on Tuesday.

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SAXONBURG — While they continue in their amazement with the community support they enjoy, officials at the South Butler Community Library said donations of all sizes are being

gratefully accepted until the end of the year.

Kristan Allen, past president and current member on the library's board of directors, said people in the six surrounding municipalities served by the library use the facility for much more than borrowing books.

She said storytime and youth programs, seminars for adults, making copies and using the computers and internet are other reasons people visit the library.

Michael Lazaroff, board president, said the library's computers allow residents to apply for jobs, create resumes, file an unemployment claim and perform other important tasks.



South Butler Community Library board members Mike Lazaroff (board president, left) and Kristen Allen (right) stand for a photo with Amanda Peterson from Penn Energy.

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“We are trying to provide something for everyone, from children up to senior citizens,” Lazaroff said.

“We want to be a hub for the community,” Allen added.

She said cards were sent to residents of the library's six municipalities notifying them of the annual fundraising campaign, which resulted in donations totaling 30% of next year's budget revenue.

State funding provided 20%, and a generous fundraising match of \$7,500 was donated by Penn Energy.

Those funds allowed the library to eclipse the \$20,000 fundraising goal and raise that goal to \$25,000.

During the pandemic, library officials have used innovation to continue to provide services to their community.

Michelle Lesniak, library director, said while the library was closed during the mandatory COVID-19 shutdown in 2020, a regular window on the west side of the library was converted to a drive-through window, so the library could continue to lend books during the pandemic.

“We never closed after that,” Lesniak said. “We have people who continue to use it.”

Other programs were created to serve residents during the pandemic, including an outdoor community garden and story trails.



Library youth services leader Bridget Weleski(left) hands a book to Kimberly Siemer at the South Butler Community Library walk through window Tuesday.

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Allen said a group of Penn State Master Gardeners approached library personnel about creating a garden where library patrons of all ages can participate in safer programs outdoors.

“We are hoping to do even more with that,” she said. “It's a great opportunity to expand our services outdoors.”

In the story trail program, Lesniak said pages of a children's storybook are copied and pasted onto yard signs and placed along a community trail, so parents and young children can get outside while enjoying a story.

“Like everything, (the pandemic) has been a challenge, but we rose to the challenge,” Lazaroff said.

Allen agreed.

“I think all community libraries are really trying to fill that role of being a connector,” she said.

Amanda Peterson, stakeholders relations manager at Penn Energy, said she learned of the library's fundraising campaign at a Winfield Township supervisors meeting.

“We operate in the library's surrounding communities,” Peterson said of Penn Energy's decision to support the library. “We have a lease hold in almost all of the six municipalities they serve. It was the perfect opportunity for us to step in.”

Allen hopes those who live in the library's territory will donate a few dollars, so both traditional and unique programs can continue.

“We are very fortunate to live in an area that considers the library important,” she said.

Donations are accepted at the library on Main Street in Saxonburg, online at southbutlerlibrary.org/donate or by sending a check payable to South Butler Community Library to P.O. Box 454, Saxonburg, PA 16056.



Phyllis Bagaley(left) of Gibsonia and Dorothee Brooks(center) of Sarver play their weekly game of Mah Jong with Phyllis Bobeck of Sarver at the South Butler Community Library Tuesday.

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Paula Grubbs

[@PaulaJoGrubbs](#)

Paula Grubbs is a Butler County native who has been with the Butler and Cranberry Eagle newspapers since June 2000. Grubbs has covered the Mars School District and Middlesex Township for over 20 years with the Eagle and her former employer, the Cranberry Journal. She also covers Adams Township, Evans City and Mars in addition to events and incidents throughout Southwestern Butler County as assigned. Grubbs has taken the lead at the Cranberry Eagle in reporting on shale gas development, which has been a hotly debated topic in the recent past, both locally and nationally. A 1979 graduate of Butler Senior High School and a 1994 graduate of Geneva College, Grubbs has won a Golden Quill and four Keystone state awards, plus an award from the Society of Professional Journalists. Grubbs enjoys following the Penguins, Pirates and Steelers, volunteers with the Connoquenessing Creek Cleanup each summer, and

loves spending time outdoors and bird watching at her Penn Township home. Grubbs is the daughter of James R. Davis Sr., of Center Township, and the late Maxine Davis. She has two grown children, Jacqueline and Thomas.
