

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

OLA PRESENTATION û February 5, 2005 9 a.m.

Purpose : To discuss how our library contributes to community development.

The Program saysà..

Libraries are in the community development business. Discover how two libraries have achieved great success by embracing this new vision of the libraryÆs reason for existing.

Before I set the scene for my small town of Gravenhurst, a few questions pop into my mind.

New vision? I wonder?

Have libraries not always been partners, in the development of their communities?

The success of all our communities is influenced, enriched and complimented by the contribution of services that our libraries have always provided.

Perhaps this new vision should be thought of as a, recommitment to what libraries have

always provided their communities, with sensitivity to changing needs and technologies.

Introduction

Gravenhurst Public Library serves a community of 10,000 with an uneven pattern of attendance, due to a large influx of tourists during the two summer months, and the snow-bird flight south in winter. Gravenhurst has two public schools, one high school, secondary educational institution are 20 û 30 minutes drive away in Bracebridge a satellite campus of Nipissing University or Orillia and Georgian College, an arena for hockey and local events, a skateboard park for youngsters, a large and active retired population with a Seniors Centre, two senior residences, an Opera House of some distinction, limited and seasonal employment opportunities, two prisons in the immediate area. In 2000 a new, larger and more effective Library was built, through grants and local fund raising contributions.

We will discuss the ways our library has been able to increase its contribution to community development û directly thru services offered, facilitating members of the community and thruÆ sponsored activities and co operative ventures. We will also indicate the areas in which we need to precede for the future.

Direct Contribution:

- a repository of information, print, electronic, local archival collection
- resources: on-site, archival information and via ILL for patrons - in person, by telephone or through email requests; such as research by authors for books on Norman Bethune, the Opera House, German POW Camp which contribute to pride in community history
- provides access to computers and Internet training û particularly important for summer visitors away from home, school children, researchers
- developed programs to encourage(supported from fundraising and grants) literacy û particularly preschool programs û some co-operative programming has been done with other Muskoka libraries. School testing indicates that the Gravenhurst area is below the Provincial average in reading û we will keep an eye on future testing to see the impact of this

early programming.

- annual Patron Appreciation Day
- authors brought in to the library for speaking engagements
- employment, volunteer and co-op opportunity and training in library, for area residents. HRDC has a clinic three days each week in the library with personal one-on-one training and assistance being offered
- annual fund raising event æAntiques RoadshowÆ provides focus for personal growth, speakers increase knowledge base and develop cultural expression, local antique entrepreneurs gain exposure, the Town gains media attention and area residents spend the day bringing in antiques with a few surprise valuation.

Facilitated Functions

- Writers Group set up with participants and library staff. Now space is provided free for meetings.
- Books for Brunch to celebrate Family Literacy Day and Internal Literacy Day. Two programs are held annually in co-operation with: Bracebridge Public Library, Muskoka Literacy Association, Trillium Lakelands School Board, Muskoka Family Focus, Catholic School Board and Muskoka/Parry Sound Early Years System. A great opportunity to share ideas and produce a great program for the public
- Cooperate with local schools - for visits (all time slots filled in period before Christmas), invitation to local school children for æOpening CeremoniesÆ of new library building, Royal Bank sponsored Read to Succeed Program
- provide site for local Legion commemorative plaques
- encourage local artist to display works
- provide office space for tax clinic for lower income families, provide neutral meeting space for probation officer to meet with younger

offenders

- responded to community request for a Book Club, provide meeting space

and a facilitator

Sponsored and Co operative Ventures

- This summer the Gravenhurst Farmer's Market was moved to the streets and parking lot beside the library which increased our exposure to the community; attendance increased dramatically on market days. Even though the parking lot and the streets were blocked.

- The library is on a side street which includes it, as part of a complex with the Opera House and is easily accessible by walking from downtown, a parking lot is situated beside the library, making it also easy for out-of-town drivers.

- The new library building was the occasion for community cohesiveness. A Friends of the Library group was formed that raised a substantial part of the project. All of the service clubs in the area held fund raising activities, Town Council was kept involved and informed throughout the process as well as the opening ceremonies. Provided an opportunity for the entire community to celebrate with officials attending and a marquis set up for refreshments.

- The approach of our fundraising committee for the Antique Road Show has been to involve smaller unique business that would like the identity of supporting our gala evening or the high traffic of appraisal day. Our philosophy is to cover every need with a sponsor.

Summary/ Conclusion

- our Library Board is committed to its contribution to the community.

- as a small community interaction is inevitable, staff and community members interact frequently both formally and recreationally.

- Farmer's Market around library has exposed our programs and facilities to a greater number of residents and guests.

- cohesiveness during the Building Fund Raising û speaking to local groups opened contacts and areas of support that have continued to benefit the whole community.
- interaction with a supportive Council during the building project helped establish open communications that was helpful when the expansion of our book purchases was needed for the new space. They are also very supportive of our on-going fundraising, by providing facilities and services at no cost.
- a large waterfront development with a 1900~~As~~ theme, Muskoka Wharf will undoubtedly change the face of future development, bringing an estimated 350 new families to the area, over the near future and increasing our retirement population.
- The library must be aware and keep informed on the growth pattern and changing ambience of the Town. Many Torontonians will be moving to the area in the coming years and their demands and expectations need to be considered.
- Assuring staff competence and training in electronic service will be challenging.
- By including a fundraising component to our library board, we have expanded our profile and continue to maintain the open communications with service groups, chamber of commerce, town council.