

Director's Report August 2021

Submitted by Chelsea Jordan-Makely on August 16, 2021

Gratitude

- We're grateful that Kate has found an incredible new opportunity, and for her years of service to GML, as well as for her willingness to stay on as a substitute. As Chelsea bemoaned to Nancy, "Who will tell me now when it's a hedgehog, not a porcupine?" Kate's selfless commitment to Colrain has been an incredible asset to our library, from the way she greets visitors to attending library programs. Best luck to her in her new endeavor!
- We received the following comment by email last month: "Just a thank you for EVERYTHING you all are doing- so many activities, such herculean efforts to keep the Library responsive and THERE for us through this long year amongst constantly changing circumstances. You are GREAT and a treasure to Colrain!"
- Thank you to Trouble Mandelson for running a Zine Making Workshop on August 14th and Just Roots for hosting the event. Thanks to Nancy for the great graphics, and coming down to take pictures!
- We're also grateful to Pine Hill for hosting our Storywalk, which will be open to the public soon! Thanks again to Nancy who put many hours into getting our story boards just right!

Building & Grounds

- Jeff Brisson, who mows the lawn, notified us about an underground bees' nest in the front of the building. Braman Termite and Pest Elimination came out at the beginning of the month to treat the affected area. The neighbor asked if in the future we can give advance warning when work of this nature will be taking place so they can keep their pets inside.
- One of our patrons generously performed a repair to the tent that had been in use in the back lawn, but unfortunately it was still not able to withstand the amount of rain received last month. Looking into the future, the library may consider a more permanent solution to provide shade and shelter for outdoor use. I've contacted Nick Anzuoni to see if the fire fighters' tent might be available at this time, and otherwise, I wonder about ordering another canvas top for the torn 10' by 12' tent.
- The proposed community fridge resulted in a lot of conversation with the select board and our neighbor to the left:
 - Nancy presented to the Select Board about the proposed community fridge several weeks ago, and per their suggestion, followed up with our neighbor shortly thereafter. Though she seemed to be on board at first, she called my house on Sunday morning, August 7th, to say that she had changed her mind and would not support the community fridge. She referenced increased traffic at the library, said they were upset about the magic show because I had let people park on their lawn and "bash" their trees, said that there were "parties" behind the library all the time (then clarified that they meant gatherings of families who came for the website but then they would let

their children run around) and said that they just weren't comfortable with the "food pantry" bringing even more people to the library. I referred them to Nancy, who was leading the community fridge project, and also to the town administrator and select board.

- On Tuesday the 10th, I spoke to the town administrator, who advised that while the community fridge wasn't on the select board agenda, they'd probably try to fit it in at some point. Because I was scheduled to be doing outreach at the transfer station, I sent the attached letter of support instead, and copied the library trustees.
- At the select board meeting, our neighbor shared numerous concerns about living next door to the library, from the proposed community fridge to the death of her trees, and the traffic from people using broadband. She shared her belief that libraries should be quiet, and that they are obsolete, despite evidence to the contrary.
- On Wednesday, the neighbor shared their concerns first with Kate, and then with Betsy. I was advised by Betsy that she was too upset to talk with me, and had said that I don't care. I sent an email to let her know that I was concerned and hoped we could talk when she was feeling up to it.
- Wednesday evening, Joe Kurland came to the library to "mediate." He suggested that we provide the neighbors with a print list of events each month, and I agreed that this was a good suggestion.
- After Joe left, the neighbor called and let me hear about all of her concerns. I heard from her for about 35 minutes, during which time she said she thought that Nancy was dishonest and manipulative, and that I don't care and am selfish. She seemed to especially focus on the markers she puts along the driveway in the winter, and that I have not been more proactive in placing markers or policing parking in the parking area. She said that she didn't think people should come to the library except to get books, and that the town should build a community center elsewhere. She said there would not be a community fridge here and that she there will be less traffic once everyone has wifi. I told her this wasn't guaranteed, and that my job is into increase visits.
- Kate had a good idea that we could ask the neighbor to put their concerns to us in a list format, and help us to understand what their top priorities and concerns may be, and what ideas they had for making life as our neighbor more bearable.
- On Saturday morning at 9:30, the neighbor asked me if I would tell the Sertex trucks that they can't visit the library, since their trucks beep when they reverse. I told the neighbor that I would give it some thought, but wasn't comfortable with this because access and creating a welcoming environment are important values.
- At 2:55 on Saturday afternoon, the neighbor came back to apologize for having come to me right as I was arriving at work. They went on to share more concerns about the Sertex trucks, and their hopes that people will stop visiting the library now that Broadband has come to town. Several times I asked if we could continue the conversation on Monday. I said that I would like to speak to the Trustees about the Sertex trucks and whether it would be right for me to ask them not visit. She said she didn't think it was okay for kids to play and yell, either, and said that if I wouldn't stop it, she would maybe have to call the police. I maintained my point that it is best for us to think about mitigating negative impacts, since people are welcome to gather here. She said too that the lawn mower had come again before 7:00, even though I had previously asked him not to mow too early out of courtesy to our neighbor. I sent him an email follow-up, and he responded as such:

No, I have not been mowing before 7am. It never happens. I don't mow before 7 anywhere. It's interesting that's her complaint because honestly by the time I get there the road construction has already begun for the day lol. The last time I mowed I mowed closer to 8am because the grass was quite wet. The reason I

mow there right around 7 am is for two reasons 1. to accommodate the patrons of the library because if I wait till after 8 then patrons parked cars are in the parking lot trying to use the WiFi and mowing is a disruption and the second reason is so that I don't have to worry about the clipping and debris coming out of the grass chute and hitting cars or people with it. Unfortunately for her that is one of the downsides to owning a house next to a public library.

I can assure you I will never be mowing before 7am.

Thanks,

Jeff

- This morning, the neighbor had emailed as to the following:

I would appreciate being remembered in decisions or plans that you make at the library property that might effect me (weather they be about the increased noise, traffic, or land care (including outside pest control, landscaping, parking, salting and sanding).

I would like to know as soon as possible before potentially larger groups will be there.

Also, sound control is very important. (The trucks with the back up beep-beeps day after day from early morning til 5pm are just too much as is the lawn mowing at 6am.)

I do appreciate that you are planning to put of more signs. Also, no parking signs along the grass and my trees would really help. As do the driveway markers for winter plowing.

Most importantly, I do not want to lose the divider trees again. (You need to know that I and others do believe that the original trees died from over salting.)

I thank you for trying to understand,

Kathryn

ps. I'm not sure if I ever mentioned this, but many men who used the WIFI in the parking lot, used the woods out back as a latrine. That's just not right.

- Because this didn't list her concerns about the children, I followed up and asked specifically, at which point she responded:

Other than the issue about there not being a bathroom for people during the hours when the Library is closed, this is a good start. We'll have to see if the new signs work to get people to turn off their headlights and engines.

I also spoke with Scott at the Highway Dept. about using a less damaging salt treatment. He is going to look in to that and also askl the plowers to reduce the spin speed, so that less salt gets thrown on my trees

As for quiet hours, let's see how the traffic goes after the road is done out front. For now, not many people are coming in.

- The neighbor came by this afternoon to say that she thinks people pee in the woods more than once a week--she reckons she sees it once a week, and that there is more. She is concerned that dogs poop here. She said that for her, it's really "all about the trees." She isn't interested in a fence, but maybe something to keep the salt away such as "contractor grade silt fencing." She said she is not interested in us having a port-o-potty, and she didn't like that. She said "things are changing" meaning that it is more quiet because of the construction and as more people get broadband. She was invited to the meeting tonight but said there is nothing she would like less.

- I spoke with Mike Slowinski this afternoon, who said that he will ask the select board to rescind their previous motion to support the library as a potential site for the community fridge. Meanwhile, the group spearheading this initiative has decided to put the project on hold.

Administration

- As of today, I've interviewed seven people for the library assistant position. I'm looking to hire more than one person so we can have more flexibility in scheduling. My top picks are all Colrainers.
- I'm mostly through the 2021 ARIS report. Filling in our hours, when the library was open for express browsing vs. just takeout has been the most challenging aspect from the pandemic year.
- I was watching [this program from the San Francisco Public Library and Oakland Public Library](#), and noted that it began with a land acknowledgment you may like to see/hear for reference.

Fundraising Committee

- In follow-up to the last fundraising committee, [I created some talking points covering our ideas as to project needs, general advocacy about what libraries do, and a prompt, "What's your vision for the area behind the library?"](#) Ellen then joined me for a day at the transfer station, where we put the question to anyone who stopped by. We received some great feedback, which I can present to you this evening.

Children's services

- The Story Walk at Pine Hill Orchard should be open to the public soon! I am waiting to hear back from Brady as to potential dates for a launch party. I have contacted Davis Bates about this possibility.
- As mentioned above, there were 45 participants in Ms. Betty's Summer Reading Club crafts for kids.
- The Magic Show with Scott Jameson took place on July 17th, with 39 people in attendance, mostly Colrain families. Feedback was mostly positive. This event showed how a covered space, shade, improved drainage, more parking, and some seating would be nice improvements to the area.

Public services and outreach

- Chelsea has hosted four pop-ups at the transfer station to date, reaching 26 people, 27 people, 30 people, and 10 people, respectively (the last pop-up was just two hours, on Tuesday evening). On each of these occasions, about a third of the people I've connected with have not been library users.
- The Zine workshop at Just Roots on August 14th was attended by 12 people in total.
- As mentioned above, 20 adults attended Summer Reading Club crafts nights.
- The Carol Purington Poetry Collective met again on August 6th after taking the previous month off. We had seven participants this time around.
- We began outreach to the Franklin County Jail, just providing discarded books that we have sourced from area libraries at this point. We are able to take them up to 30 books once a week, meaning that we have been able to give them about 80 books to date. There are a total of seven area libraries participating. We have been asked to begin some programming in the late fall, after myself and another area librarian are trained and have received clearance.

Professional Development

- Look for Chelsea's feature article in *Library Journal* this coming month.

Appendix 1: Chelsea's letter to the Colrain Select Board

To: Members of the Colrain Select Board

CC: Town Administrator, Griswold Memorial Library Board of Trustees

August 10, 2021

Dear Members of the Colrain Select Board,

I understand that concerns have been raised about the proposed location of a community fridge at the Griswold Memorial Library (GML) at 12 Main Road, and have talked directly with our neighbor to hear their thoughts on the matter.

I understand that having visitors so near to one's residence doesn't fit with the quaint Massachusetts lifestyle than Colrain exemplifies for so many. Yet, the Griswold Memorial Library is the heart of our community. As one local said, "It's a great resource that offers a lot in a town that doesn't have a lot." We're really proud to serve in this role and to attract people to this beautiful, central location where they can access services that make a little bit easier. This goes beyond information, books, programs, and wifi, to include the connections that people make with each other at the library, on our grounds, and in our parking lot. Research shows that this is one of the most important functions of public libraries, and why people who use their libraries feel a greater sense of connection to their communities—because of the chance opportunities where they see and engage with other people.

GML is now open to the public 32 hours a week, and we've been doing more to connect with non-library users through outreach initiatives like "library pop-ups" at the transfer station, but there is still lots more that we could do to attract more people to the library, and to help them to connect with the resources they need to be successful in life. A community fridge aids in this work since people can use the cover of a safe, neutral, and accessible public space to discreetly access food. I envision that they might also return their library books, get some free books (if we incorporate a space for free books into the designs), and if the library is open, they can come inside, see what's new, and who knows what adventures await from there!

As a public librarian, it is always a challenge to attract new library users and to show them ways that we can help them to connect with opportunities to grow and thrive, or maybe just save money. I think the community fridge proposal for GML is a fit, and that we can find ways to protect our patrons' and our neighbors' privacy both, for the greater good of the community. To this end, please advise as to how we can help mitigate any concerns, or if you have further questions for me about this project. I look forward to hearing your thoughts about how best to proceed.

Kind regards,

Chelsea

Chelsea Jordan-Makely
Library Director