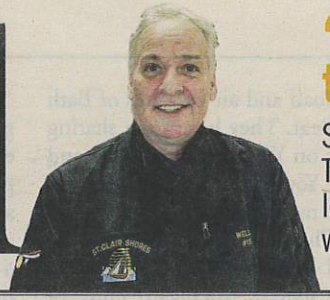
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A new year, a new and improved library

BY JULIE SNYDER
jsnyder@candgnews.com

HARRISON TOWNSHIP — Since voters approved a tax-funded public library in August 2014, longtime volunteers and supporters have seen considerable change.

It's all positive, of course.

Volunteer Director Melissa Goins said since the Harrison Township Public Library became part of the Suburban Library Cooperative on Oct. 1, 2014 — a move that allows card holders the ability to use all 23 participating libraries — not only has circulation increased greatly, so has the number of card holders.

"In January, we checked out 400 more items than we did in January 2014," said Goins, a longtime volunteer with the library. "On average, we've been experiencing about 200 more checkouts per month since joining the SLC. One of the neatest things we've witnessed are Harrison Township residents visiting the library for the first time. Many of them express surprise

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Since a millage passed last August, resident volunteers at the Harrison Township Public Library have been making plans for some considerable changes in the year to come, starting with the recent formation of a Library Board.

Photo by Julie Snyder

Library

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at what we've accomplished as a volunteer library, and we've heard new visitors say more than once, 'I didn't expect it to look like a real library.' That statement makes our volunteers beam (from) ear to ear every time. Even better is when new members come in to get a card just so they can use other libraries and end up checking out items at the Harrison Township Public Library. We've really done a lot as a volunteer library with just a little bit and we're anxious to continue moving the library forward."

Some 70 volunteers are still working to keep the library up and running on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

In October, the Harrison Township Board of Trustees appointed a Library Board led by Board President Dianne Marvaso.

Marvaso, a resident of the township for 40 years, has been involved in the library in a volunteer capacity since 2004.

She has been involved in every aspect of the library's evolution, from helping find a home to stocking the shelves.

"It was all the volunteers who worked hard over the years to get it going and make it a real library," said Marvaso, adding that the passage of the millage last year has brought on a lot of change. "It was wonderful, and it really has brought the community together and made more people aware of just how great a library they have here."

Marvaso said the Library Board will be looking to hire a full-time library director, who will in turn hire paid staff and re-launch some of the many programs at the library and eventually start offering extended days and hours of operation and amenities like e-books and MelCat, a library loan program that will allow Harrison Township library members to borrow materials from over 400 libraries across Michigan. So if the Harrison Township library doesn't have what a member is looking for, chances are they'll be able to get it for you.

"We've been working to get MelCat launched for our members and anticipate a launch date for the service in the spring," Goins said.

Goins added that being a part of the SLC has been a major factor in their steadily increasing popularity.

"Since joining, we've issued nearly 800 new cards, and that's huge; nearly 200 new cards per month," she said. "We've been experiencing the largest member growth surge in HTPL history and it hasn't slowed down yet.

"In addition to our SLC membership, we've already incorporated other new services," she said. "We've already launched our participation with the Michigan Activity Pass program, which allows library members to receive discounts at over 70 arts and cultural organizations across Michigan, including museums, art centers, historic sites and more. We've also launched Zinio e-magazine service. HTPL members can now read magazines on their electronic devices for free."

And plans for either an expansion or relocating to a larger space are in the distant future.

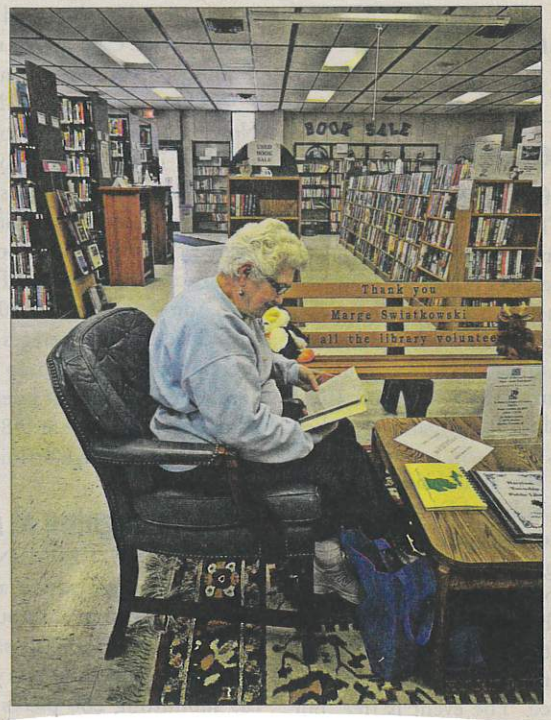
Public library funds are currently being collected with the winter taxes until Feb. 14, the deadline to pay without penalty.

"We anticipate that the funds will be available soon and are getting all our ducks in a row to launch new services as quickly as possible once we have them," Goins said.

"All that being said, the volunteers are an excellent resource that all libraries are lucky to have," Goins said. "We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the phenomenal volunteers that have stepped up to help keep the volunteer library going. Of course, we'll continue to incorporate that resource as much as possible."

Other members of the Harrison Township Library Board include Vice President John DaVia, Secretary Diane Nelson, Treasurer John Gabor, and members at large Jim Bilen and Linda Silvonen.

To view the posting for the library director position, go to https://sites.google.com/a/htplib.org/htplib/home/director-posting. The posting closes on March 6.



Donna Dertinger enjoys a quiet read at the Harrison Township Public Library Feb. 11.

Photo by Julie Snyder