

Carlow Mayo Public Library reopens to the public



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Carlow Mayo Public Library reopened to the public on July 3. Carrie McKenzie, the head librarian, was thrilled to be able to open up, and have patrons come through the door for the first time in 18 months. All COVID-19 protocols will be in place when they reopen, and there will be time limits on computer usage and browsing the books, magazines and DVDs. The library is open on Tuesday and Thursday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

McKenzie said in an email from June 30 that she and her team were so excited for the opening on July 3, noting that it was the first time they were able to open for public browsing and computer usage since the pandemic began in March, 2020. This is because their library is attached to Hermon Public School, and everyone involved wanted to ensure not only the safety of everyone of course, but primarily the students as well.

"Computer usage is limited to 30-minute sessions, and though appointments are not necessary, they're recommended so that when you arrive there's no wait time," she says.

McKenzie pointed out that browsing in the library is limited to 15-minute sessions, so that everyone can get a chance to peruse the books during the opening hours.

Masks are required to enter the premises, and COVID-19 symptom screening will be required as recommended by HPEPH. Contact information will be collected as well. Unfortunately, washrooms are unavailable for patron use. If people still feel uncomfortable with the prospect of coming into the library, curbside pickup is still being offered.

"Lori [Cooper Padgett] and I are working hard to catalogue lots of new DVDs and books, so there is a fresh collection to choose from," she says.

On the opening day, July 3, McKenzie reiterated how excited they were to be open and how grateful they were to the schoolboard for letting them open. She said she'd had patrons there first thing when she opened the doors at 10 a.m.

"It's a bit of a process doing the contact tracing but so far, so good. Everyone's good with it," she says.

McKenzie also mentioned that they're getting donations coming in as well. That morning, a donation of books arrived from the Clarington Public Library. McKenzie explained that as libraries get new stock, they'll get rid of old items, and they'll ship them around to other libraries to save costs.

Jack and Nancy White arrived at 11 a.m. as they'd booked a time to use the library computers. Jack is a library board member and Nancy is a "super volunteer" according to McKenzie, who also says she's a master baker, baking cookies for everyone when they need them.

The Whites thought it was great that the library was open once again, and had been remarking how long it had been since they'd last been in the building over breakfast that morning.

"We're library junkies. We use the computer because we don't have Internet at home. We love the books and we love the DVDs," she says. "Everything the library has, we want," he says. "[This reopening] is a big step!"