

North Hastings celebrates Ontario library week

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By Chris Drost

Club 580 in Bancroft was bustling with activity on the morning of Oct. 25 in celebration of Ontario Library Week.

The sounds of the Bad Breath Blues Band greeted community members, library volunteers, staff and politicians as they arrived for the short presentation. The band is part of the Music in the Library program which alternates between practicing at the Hastings Highlands Public Library and Club 580. (due to space and accessibility limitations at the North Hastings Public Library in Bancroft). Kim McMunn, CEO at NHPL, who has worked at three of the libraries in North Hastings, welcomed everyone and said, "The libraries in North Hastings have the edge on innovation." She highlighted the fact that Hastings Highlands built a community hub in 2011 using a school/municipal/community model. Bancroft has had a library since 1901. Historian, Mike Burns, once told her that the first librarian, Alice Mullett, used to black out words in the books and she would choose your books for you, refusing to lend any she deemed inappropriate.

With a contract now in place with Limerick Township and the Township of Faraday, the newly named, North Hastings Public Library is truly a regional one. She said, "Usage is growing at the library in Bancroft but the library isn't. We need to get out of there."

McMunn noted that although the provincial government has cut funding for the inter-library loan program, she has recently received word that they will be getting inter-connectivity funding again.

On hand to celebrate were MPP Daryl Kramp, Reeve Carl Stefanski from Limerick Township, Councillor Alex Walder, representing Mayor Vic Bodnar who was unable to attend, Reeve Bonnie Adams of Carlow Mayo and Mayor Paul Jenkins of Bancroft.

Councillor Walder expressed support from Hastings Highlands for building a new library in Bancroft. He said, "What is good for Bancroft is good for Hastings Highlands and the other way around." He added, "It is also good for the province." He said, "This is not just bricks and mortar? it is the people who make it work." On that note, he thanked Rod Moffitt, CEO at HHPL for his hard work in establishing many programs. He concluded by saying, "Information is a commodity for economic development that we badly need."

Reeve Bonnie Adams of Carlow Mayo said she was delighted to attend the celebration and shared a number of reasons why libraries are important.

McMunn invited David Giles, community representative on the library board from the Township of Faraday, to come forward. He said, "Library week is a really important week. Support from government and the community is important as we try to expand the NHPL."

Reeve of Limerick Township, Carl Stefanski said, "Our council is a big supporter of the library." After McMunn came and did her presentation they made a donation. He added, "Do not hesitate to call on us for additional help."

Mayor Paul Jenkins referred to the Carlow Mayo banner and said, "Libraries are more than just books." He said they are social, cultural, tourism, educational, good for mental health and more. He thanked the partners and Hastings Highlands for their support. He said, "In a lower income community like ours people do not have access to everything. All that goes into the library will reap greater benefits." The audience clapped enthusiastically when Jenkins said that he hopes there will be an exciting announcement in a couple of weeks about the library.

Following the comments from the local political representatives, McMunn, explained that the event was an opportunity to honour people in the community who have played an important role in our libraries.

She called on Rod Moffitt, CEO at HHPL, to present a certificate in absentia to Deb Jeffrey. Moffitt said that Jeffrey has served for years and that she is "a person with a wonderful heart." Jeffrey wants to see the best for the children as she runs the Reading/Rhyming and Running Around program on Tuesday mornings. He added that if there are other community events, Jeffrey is always willing to set up a table to help promote the library.

Although not able to attend, Lorne Tregaskis was honoured by Carrie McKenzie, CEO at Carlow Mayo Library, for his helpfulness in fixing anything IT related. She said, "One call and he is there. The day he retires will be a sad day."

Sean Grant was also awarded a certificate for his 14 years as a dedicated custodian at the school. "He fixes stuff and keeps the library clean and has chairs all set out for events," McKenzie said as she expressed her thanks for his service.

MPP Daryl Kramp was on hand with McMunn to present a certificate to Susan McDermott who, after retiring from the school board, has helped out the libraries weekly for 14 years. McMunn said, "She is a very valued member of the team."

McMunn said, "Jean McCormack who has worked as an employee with the library for 20 years, told me years ago that she would stay until the Bancroft library relocated. I don't think she realized just how long that might be!" McCormack has cleaned and provided an inviting space for staff and patrons alike for these many years.

Kramp, the final speaker for the morning, said, in reference to the name of the band, "I never appreciated bad breath so much." He recalled that in his early life, "Full marks go to my mother who never let a day go by that she didn't read to me. Knowledge is a wonderful thing. The more you have an opportunity to read, the more you have an understanding of the world."

Kramp went on to laud the volunteers. He said, "It couldn't be done without volunteers. We are here to not only celebrate Library Week but to celebrate those who make it happen. Never underestimate how important knowledge is."

Following the presentations, a member of the music group stepped forward to offer funds raised for a student bursary at the high school. The Baptiste Lake Association and the music group have donated sufficient funds to provide bursaries to seven deserving students in the new year.

Additionally, the music group offered a card of thanks to McMunn for arranging for them to use Club 580 for their practices and provided a donation that "won't build a new library but it is a token of our support."