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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Meeting New Needs: The Transformation of the Wauconda Area Library from Old to Wow!

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WAUCONDA – The Wauconda Area Library has been completely transformed by its recent \$2 million renovation and remodeling of its interior. The most common reaction when new patrons enter the library for the first time is “Wow!” The most common reaction from patrons who remember the pre-renovation library is “Wow – what a difference!” The “wow factor” was the driving force behind the design and planning of this renovation, and the library has achieved this with some impressive results.

Patron count has been up 20 to 40 percent each month since the project ended in late March. The previous downward trend in circulation of library materials in recent years has been reversed. The library’s DVD and Blu-ray collections are particularly popular because of bright new shelving and more convenient location. In June alone, 23,362 movies were checked out – 48 percent more than in June of 2014. Books are making a comeback as well, though not so dramatically.

The project began on schedule and from beginning to end it took about one year to complete. The work was done in three phases, enabling the library to remain open to the public through most of the project. Actual construction began in November, 2014, and was completed in March, 2015 but the library is not expected to be back up to full speed until mid-August when its fall programming season starts.

When asked about the outcome of the renovation, Library Director Tom Kern replied, “This library now has so much more to offer than materials, programs, and computers. While the library is still the best place to go to borrow books, DVDs and CDs, this is no longer the primary focus because it is no longer considered the primary need - at least not exclusively, as in ‘the old days.’ The library is now a dynamic community center for everyone - no matter what your age or background - for learning, discovery, collaboration, communication, creativity, enrichment, or for just plain fun. It is a place of infinite possibilities. As our slogan says – ‘Start here. Go anywhere.’”

The library paid for the renovation using its special reserve funds, a large grant from the State of Illinois, and a low-interest ten-year loan. The library titled its application for the construction grant “Meeting New Needs.” This may have been an understatement, but it sums up the overall impact of the renovation. Kern noted that in retrospect, the library could have more accurately titled the project “Meeting New Needs: The Transformation of the Wauconda Area Library from Old to Wow!”

In addition to revitalizing the facility with new more dynamic design and use of light and color, the renovation has resulted in dozens of important new features:

Adult Area

- Improved customer experience, as staff members are much more accessible
- New attractive, more efficient service desks designed to break down barriers and improve the customer experience
- New Call Center that handles all incoming calls, answering questions immediately and enabling service desk staff to focus on their customers
- Easier access to library materials because of brighter, more attractive and inviting display furnishings
- New seating throughout the library that is more comfortable and well suited for each location
- Improved community meeting room – new AV system and control center
- Large multi-purpose high-tech classroom equipped with iMacs
- Three new small meeting rooms equipped with large white boards and 60-inch HDTV
- New periodicals display that provides user-friendly access to current and back issues
- Improved self-serve café with high-capacity K-Cup vending and brewing machines
- Quiet reading room with a gas-fueled contemporary stone fireplace
- New public computer spaces more effectively situated within sight lines of service desks
- Updated printing/copying center – scan to email or UDB drive for free!

Children's Area (Kid City)

- Large inspiring and interactive displays available only at the library
- New giant interactive TouchIT LED display as kids enter Kid City, akin to a 7-foot tablet. Wauconda Area Library was the first public library in Illinois to get one of these.
- Giant airplane-themed preschooler play space with slide, controls, and virtual HDTV airplane “windows”
- Giant 8-foot 630-hole Light-Brite with 396 large attractive colored acrylic rods
- Crank-powered paper airplane launcher
- Kid-friendly interactive supermarket with crank-powered conveyor belt for groceries
- Attractive user-friendly maker space – available at all times – equipped with sink and more
- New gaming space with Wii, Game Box, and PlayStation 4
- More kid-friendly computers, iPads and other educational technology
- New improved service desk with improved sight lines throughout the area

Teen Area (The Lounge)

- New maker space for teens
- Large, open teen-friendly space
- New furnishings and layout designed for social networking – online or in person
- Another 7-foot interactive TouchIT LED display, funded by the Friends of the Library
- New gaming/collaboration space ready for addition of Wii, Game Box, and PlayStation 4
- New digital media production lab downstairs with state-of-the-art equipment and software designed for creating a wide variety of digital multi-media projects
- The Lounge is adult-friendly, as well – especially during school hours

END OF PRESS RELEASE

The Wauconda Area Public Library District, located in Lake and McHenry Counties in Chicago's northwest suburbs, serves a population of 27,246 residents, including all or portions of Island Lake, Lakemoor, Lake Barrington, Port Barrington, Volo, and Wauconda.



Kids at Wauconda Area Library spread their wings and fly!