



# **NORMAN WILLIAMS PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **Annual Report**

**2019 - 2020**

# **PRESIDENT'S LETTER:**

## **A Year of Success in the Face of Unique Challenge**



*Ron Miller*

Norman Williams Public Library has served the people of Woodstock and surrounding communities for 135 years. Although the fiscal year 2019-20

presented numerous challenges, the library's devoted staff and its Board of Trustees worked diligently to ensure that these would not interrupt our venerable legacy. We are pleased to inform you that NWPL is thriving and stands ready to continue serving you for years to come.

We began the year knowing that our historic building's heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system was severely compromised and needed to be replaced to the tune of half a million dollars—nearly as much as our entire annual budget. Then the library's Executive Director resigned. A few months later, the nation was struck by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing the library's closure and the cancellation of our most important annual fundraising event, the *Ex Libris* Gala. In addition, by damaging the national economy, the pandemic posed a real threat to all our sources of income.

However, backed by the loyal generosity of our donors and the taxpayers of Woodstock and Bridgewater (along with some help from federal pandemic response funds), and with the steadfast support of Friends of NWPL, the library has weathered these challenges, emerging even stronger than before.

We raised all the funding needed to install a far more efficient, state-of-the-art climate-control system, completed the project within budget, and invested in a community solar energy project that will reduce our operating costs even further. During the year, we obtained new computers for patron use and completed the

installation of audiovisual presentation equipment in the main floor meeting room. Meanwhile, a hardworking group of former and current trustees completed a thorough update of our corporate bylaws.

The board appointed veteran staff members Clare McFarland and Kathy Beard as interim co-directors, and they capably navigated the library through the pandemic crisis, expanding patrons' access to Internet resources and reaching out to the community through creative online programming, such as children's storytimes and adult book reviews. We want to take this opportunity to publicly thank Clare and Kathy for stepping up with such aplomb during this challenging time.

Just after the fiscal year concluded, the library's trustees appointed Clare as NWPL's new permanent Library Director. We, as well as the staff, are thrilled to have Clare's experience, professionalism, and even-keeled leadership in place to serve the library and our patrons.

NWPL is an anchor institution for our community. It is open to all and can be trusted by all as a source of reliable information, a bridge between diverse segments of the community, and a home for lifelong learning. We take these roles to heart, and we will work harder than ever in the coming year to make the library a welcoming and nurturing place for everyone.

I hope you enjoy reading this report about our past year. Because of COVID, we are not holding a public annual meeting this year. However, we want to hear from you! Please contact me, our trustees, our Library Director, or our staff if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas about how the library can better serve you, your family, and our community.

**Ron Miller, President**

*DID YOU KNOW? Much of the good work of our library is accomplished through the time and efforts graciously donated by our volunteers every week of the year. NWPL's staff, trustees, and patrons very much appreciate the notable contributions during this fiscal year of Constance Creed, Jen Danly, Fran Lancaster, Mac McClelland, Rose Mroszczyk, Khorshed Randeria, Leigh Snell, and Donna Steed.*

# TREASURER'S LETTER:

## Financial Strength in Unstable Times



Joe Boyd

Thanks to the generous support of many people, both in the past and continuing to the present, the library is in great financial shape. Our fiscal year runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, so all references here refer to the period that ended June 30, 2020.

Our balance sheet is well positioned with a healthy investment portfolio and virtually no debt. The only debt that we do

have was taken strategically this spring in the form of a small temporary loan contracted through the Federal Government's Payroll Protection Program (i.e. PPP loan). This was made available in response to the Covid-19 related closures of many businesses. We anticipate that this loan will be forgiven and converted into a grant under the terms of the government's program. If that comes to pass, the loan will be extinguished, and the balance that is forgiven will show as income in 2021.

Although we are an independent nonprofit organization, our mission is to serve as a public library. Therefore, a large portion of our operating funds comes from the towns of Woodstock and Bridgewater, which in fiscal 2020 accounted for 43% of the library's annual operating income. The other most significant source is the generosity of supporters who contributed to our spring and fall annual appeals, which generated 28% of our funding. Endowment income provided 16% of our financial needs. The remaining 13% came from all other revenue sources, such as book sales and parking rental. All of these percentages were distorted in 2020 (increased) due to the cancellation this spring of our annual *Ex Libris* Gala -- our major fund raising event of the year.

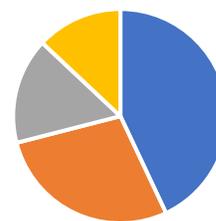
We spend by far the largest portion of our budget on our employees: two-thirds of our costs are employee related expenses -- and well worth it. While books and related media make up only 8% of total expenses, that still comes to more than \$35,000, an amount that

buys the new materials each year that keep our collections current and interesting. What may at first glance seem like an imbalance between the spending on people and spending on books actually reflects the substantial expenditures necessary to provide the many programs and services that the library presents and supports.

Maintaining our beautiful building and its grounds required \$50,000 or about 11% of our total expenses in 2020. This does not include the extensive work done to install our new state-of-the-art heating, ventilating, and cooling system (HVAC). This major undertaking cost approximately \$500,000 and was essentially underwritten by the generosity of local donors who provided more than \$400,000 to the project.

Regarding the balance sheet, as of June 30, 2020, we had more than \$120,000 in bank account balances that include some of the PPP loan proceeds and unspent funds raised for the HVAC project in addition to normal operating funds. The endowment investment portfolio, which is well managed by our investment advisors at Morgan Stanley, totaled over \$2,000,000 on June 30. The value of our fixed assets is an accounting value based on historic cost minus formula depreciation rather than the market value of those assets. We consider our building to be priceless! The only regular liabilities that the library has are normal small bills and accrued expenses that are routinely cleared monthly. The result is a substantial reserve position.

### NWPL Income Sources: Fiscal 2020



■ Town Funds ■ Annual Appeals ■ Endowment ■ Other

*Income sources this fiscal year were unique due to COVID-19, which forced the cancellation of NWPL's largest fundraiser: the Ex Libris Gala, which would have taken place in April.*



*ARC Mechanical's Ray LeClair works in the library's lower-floor ceiling to install brand new refrigeration pipes.*

### **The NWPL Endowment**

NWPL's endowment now totals over \$2,000,000, thanks to generous contributions and a strong stock market over recent years. These funds provide a base from which we can draw if required to supplement our other funding sources and meet the annual financial needs to operate the library.

The endowment portfolio is monitored quarterly by an investment committee comprised of library trustees and several interested and knowledgeable community members. Our investment

strategies are principally informed by our advisors at Morgan Stanley. The portfolio is a perpetual fund. Therefore, all investment considerations have a long-term perspective. We typically maintain a position of between 60% and 70% equity securities with the balance in fixed-income investment instruments.

We employ a standard formula to determine the maximum amount that we can prudently draw for our annual operating budget while maintaining our principal balance for the long term. The formula provides discipline, but it also limited our withdrawal to about \$86,000 in 2020.

We could not operate the library in the manner we desire or the public expects and deserves without these funds. However, against rising costs, the financial contribution to our operating budget from our endowment neither increases nor decreases significantly from year to year; neither do the allotments from the towns. As a result, we must raise a substantial and increasing amount of money each year through public appeals and events. This requires a lot of hard work, which we are happy to do. However, such efforts are an unreliable source of funding from a planning and budgeting perspective. Given so much uncertainty in the present economy, we have been conservative in our fundraising projections for 2021.

To alleviate such heavy dependence on perennial fundraising, our goal is to increase the endowment balance over the next year or two. We hope to generate a meaningful increase in the money available for annual operating needs and thereby reduce our reliance on fundraising. This means soliciting sizable contributions and bequests from patrons who love the library and have the means to contribute generously to the library's endowment fund.

**Joe Boyd, Treasurer**

## **NWPL Development Summary for Fiscal 2020**

The year 2020 proved challenging for NWPL, as it was for most nonprofit organizations. The year began with our capital campaign to replace our aging heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system. We successfully met our goal thanks to gifts, large and small, from multiple foundations and a broad cross-section of individuals in our community.

We are especially appreciative and humbled by the generosity of both year-round and seasonal residents. We are also pleased to report that our new HVAC system's construction and installation was completed on budget and on time, with the system becoming operational in early spring. The efficiency of the new system will lower energy and operating costs for years to come. Additionally,

the system's effectiveness enables the library to operate with exceptionally effective air filtration, significantly improving the building's health considerations and air quality.

This year the library also received a significant gift to enable our participation in a local solar array, which will provide an appreciable portion of the library's electrical energy and enable us to further reduce our use of fossil fuels.

The cancellation of in-person events in late winter and early spring significantly hampered our development efforts. Our largest fundraising event of the year, our April 2020 Gala, was canceled due to COVID-19. Additionally, the closure of many spaces in the library meant that we could not generate funds from the foyer book sale and the annual Bookstock book sale. The inability to host these events resulted in a loss of nearly \$50,000 in critical funds that the library depends on to operate.

However, on a particularly positive note, our revenues from both the fall and spring appeals increased by over 20%. This increase was critical to making up some of the loss of fundraising event revenues. We hope that our 2020 fall appeal (mailed in early November) will bring in much-needed funds to get the library through this winter. Now, more than ever, we need to work as hard as we can to get in operating funds to keep critical services available to all members of the community during the difficult few months ahead.

The library staff and board of trustees continue to be inspired and encouraged by our patrons, volunteers, and our community's extraordinary generosity. The belief in the library and all that it does for everyone in our area is greatly appreciated.

**Michael Ricci, Development Director**



*In October 2019, the ArtisTree Music Theatre Festival joined the greater Woodstock community to boost support for NWPL's 2019 capital campaign during an already challenging year – which would only worsen in coming months with COVID-19 – by performing a special cabaret fundraiser. Actors (from left) Scott Moreau, Renee Jackson, Cree Carrico, Johanna Carlisle-Zepeda, and Josh Bardier appeared gratis for the event.*

## **The Friends of the Norman Williams Public Library: Partners in Success**

The Friends of NWPL are a strong supporter and advocate for the library in the Woodstock community. In the past, the Friends' donations have included a new portable audio system, accessories and furnishings for the library, new computers for patrons, and maintenance of the outdoor gardens. The Friends also support the library staff with sponsorships for librarian participation in conferences.

Friends' events are the annual Love Your Library Valentine's Day Open House, the Spring Concert, Puppies & Pooches on Parade summer dog show, the Holiday Tea, weekly Bridge games, and various visiting author programs.



*2020 Puppies & Pooches on Parade Winner "Amie," owned by the Horsman family of Woodstock*

This past year, the Friends have been active even with the COVID-19 situation. The group communicates via email and Zoom meetings.

The Puppies & Pooches on Parade fundraising event for 2020 was held online with a new website ([www.puppiesandpoochesonparade.com](http://www.puppiesandpoochesonparade.com)). This website helped raise money for the library. It also extended the Friends' reach by having an online presence for this major fundraiser.

**Gary Horsman, Trustee Liaison to The Friends**

# **LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S LETTER:**

## **Innovation in Response to COVID-19**



*Clare McFarland*

**N**orman Williams Public Library serves as a community gathering place for all ages. Our mission is to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of the greater Woodstock community by providing access to literature,

culture, current information, and technology.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit our nation, state, and community last March, it forced us to close our building to the public and adapt quickly to a new reality.

Acutely aware that our library is a critical resource for people of all ages, our staff worked swiftly to transform our offerings, tailoring them with technology and content to meet the needs and interests of our patrons.

We began by relocating the Wi-Fi router to enable Internet access outside the building. To ensure that anyone could access our online resources regardless of residency, we did not hesitate to offer free library cards to all. In a matter of weeks, our online services included e-learning courses, digital apps, thousands of audiobooks, eBooks, and a movie-streaming service.

Our children's librarians zoomed weekly storytimes for preschoolers, and they continue to hold monthly book discussion groups for older children. Our weekly newsletter and website now include wonderful online resources that include a link for our always popular Breakout EDU.

Our lively adult services programs have gone virtual as well. *Recite* (our monthly poetry gathering), Thursday's knitters and *What's on Your Nightstand* can all be joined via a ZOOM

invitation. Book reviews and our upcoming cooking series will continue to be accessible on our new NWPL YouTube channel.

In May, we began a new curbside pickup service, which allows patrons to check out materials that are then placed in paper bags for pick up. In the first two days of this service, we checked out more than 500 items!

In early August, we reopened the library on a limited basis for in-person visits. We are all looking forward to the day (hopefully soon) when we can reopen more fully and with a complete lineup of services. For now, however, we have learned to adapt and become more creative librarians in our determined efforts to keep our patrons engaged and informed.

Vermont State Librarian Jason Broughton advises all Vermont librarians to reopen in a slow, methodical, and thoughtful way -- always considering the needs of their local community and the capabilities of our building. We can assure our patrons that we at NWPL will always make decisions with safety first and foremost in our minds.

Thanks to all of you for your understanding and patience as we work through this "new normal."

**Clare McFarland, NWPL Library Director**



*The Fat Hat Clothing Company donated 20 custom-made masks so NWPL staff and their patrons could stay safe in the "new normal" brought on by COVID-19.*

# When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Going....Virtually Speaking

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic varied from region to region and state to state, it's fair to say that it shuttered many institutions and left others with dramatically reduced functionality. Other organizations, however, like our own Norman Williams Public Library, responded to the challenge by changing the rules of operations, morphing in literally dozens of ways from physical to virtual, Internet-based programming. For NWPL, this virtual blossoming of online programs and services has actually expanded the number of opportunities available to patrons in ways that will continue long after the pandemic is over.

The library's new director, Clare McFarland, summed it all up this way: "Like nearly every other library across the U.S., our building did have to close, but we were open to our patrons virtually. Through online services like e-learning, digital apps including thousands of audiobooks and e-books, online live storytimes, digital 'face-to-face' meetups, and other means, we've had a chance to reconnect and even to expand our services.



*NWPL's virtual knitters group.*

"For example, we've reframed our programs to eliminate fines for late returns, to virtually renew expired cards and extend free cards to a more expansive number of towns. We're using new processes to renew books and to sanitize and then quarantine returned books," she continued. "In the process, we've streamlined and upgraded our online catalogues for our patrons as well."

NWPL's staff also used virtual media like its virtual monthly newsletter and social media like Woodstock's *Town Crier* as powerful methods of reaching its patrons, informing them of how to access both traditional and brand-new programs. As a result, virtualized "established" programs have actually increased in attendance. For example, the library's weekly story time hour for preschoolers, carried live via video teleconferencing each week by pre-registration only, has enjoyed higher participation than before the pandemic.

Other programs retained and sustained thanks to video teleconferencing include the library's virtual knitters group; What's on Your Nightstand: the Not-a-Book-Club Book Club; and the Recite! Poetry Group. Further, NWPL has preserved its art program, moving exhibits from its Mezzanine to the Internet.

But perhaps the most notable development that has grown from NWPL's success in virtualizing its programming is the explosion of new online learning resources and opportunities that NWPL now offers at a time when they're no longer available elsewhere – at least for now. "Since folks can't access books as easily as before COVID-19," said Clare, "we've expanded patrons' access to eBooks and a host of online educational programs that include online job certifications and SAT college-entry test preparation courses."

In May, the library also announced the addition of **Recorded Books RB Digital**, free to NWPL cardholders. This program offers nearly 10,000 downloadable audio books and more than 775 downloadable eBooks; language learning through **Pimsleur Language**; access to the prestigious **AUDIO Great Courses**; and **ACORN TV**.

In addition, NWPL's adult services now include: **Universal Class**: more than 500 online classes across scores of subject areas; **Learning Express**: an academic skills-building resource; **Green Mountain Library Consortium, Libby and Overdrive Advantage**: a broad collection of audiobooks and eBooks, available only to NWPL patrons.

And for youth of all ages, new virtual options include: **Yoga Time with Angel Rubino**: yoga videos for preschoolers; **Breakout EDU for Kids**: an immersive learning games platform for children; and **Lunch Doodles with Mo Willems**, Artist in Residence, Kennedy Center.

**Gina McAllister, Chair-Communications, PR, and Marketing**

## NWPL Staff



*Clare McFarland, Library Director & Youth Services Director*



*Kathy Beard, Adult Services Director*



*Meg Brazill, Marketing & Programs Director*



*Michael Ricci, Development Director*



*Sherry Wian, Adult Services Librarian*



*Ria Heinz, Adult Services Librarian*



*Adrienne McFarland, Youth Services Librarian*



*Danelle Sims, Adult Services Librarian*



*Lori Mitchell, Adult Services Librarian*



*Ellen Desmeules, Tech Services Director*



*Jane Blanchard, Bookkeeper*

## NWPL Board of Trustees (fiscal 2019-2020)



*Ron Miller, President*



*Bill Colson, Vice President*



*Joe Boyd, Treasurer*



*Alison Hankey, Secretary*



*Laurie Chester, Chair-Development*



*Mark Hall\**



*Gary Horsman\*, Former Secretary*



*Anthea Lavallee*



*Gina McAllister, Chair-PR/Mktg/Comms & Exec. Search*



*Chris McLroy, Chair-ARTF*



*Brenda Metzler*



*Roland Moore\**



*Barbara Trippel Simmons\*, Chair- Bylaws*



*Karen White\**



*John Williams*

*\* Indicates a former NWPL Trustee whose service was completed during fiscal 2019-2020*