

Chesterfield Library celebrates 20th anniversary

Variety of special events planned

By Katelyn Larese
Associate Editor

The Chesterfield Township Library will celebrate a milestone anniversary this month with a variety of special events and activities.

The library was established 20 years ago by a

vote of the people in a special election in November 1994. An all-day celebration is planned to take place at the library to mark the occasion on Nov. 15.

"We want it to be a really fun day," said Chesterfield Township Library Director Marion Lusardi. "You can buy books; you can listen to great music. You can come and see the animals in the

morning. There's something for everyone."

The celebration will kick off at 10:30 a.m. with a special children's program featuring Wildlife Safari. The company offers hands-on natural science programs that combine education and entertainment while promoting the concept of safe, fun and positive interactions

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Marion Lusardi has served as director of the Chesterfield Township Library for 18 years.

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with living creatures, according to its website.

At 12:30 p.m., the library meeting room will be dedicated to the memory of John Hebert, a longtime Voice columnist and library employee who passed away in 2013.

"John Hebert worked for the library when it opened; he was one of the original staff members in 1994," Lusardi said. "He was a very, very beloved staff member. We're family here. We're a very close staff."

The dedication will include the presentation of a memorial plaque, and refreshments will be served, the director noted.

In addition, the Friends of the Library group will conduct their monthly used book sale from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Every dime they make at the used book sale comes back into the library," Lusardi said.

Local author and historian Alan Naldrett, who also serves as a trustee on the Chesterfield Library Board, will perform with his band F Street Blues at 1:30 p.m.

"My band, F Street Blues, played at the library acoustically back in the days when

the library was in the Premier mall," Naldrett said. "We've wanted to do an electric gig there ever since."

Starting small

The Chesterfield Township Library opened its doors in 1994 in a small space on 23 Mile Road near the Premier Complex.

"That was a challenge," said Lusardi, who has served as library director for the past 18 years. "It got too expensive for us to stay and we needed to have more room because the community's just grown so much. There wasn't a lot of existing real estate that could accommodate a library that we could afford and that's how we ended up here (on Patricia Avenue, off of Chesterfield Road between 23 Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue)."

When voters approved the establishment of the library in 1994, they also approved a dedicated library millage rate of .7 mills, which has since been reduced to .6465 mills, Lusardi noted.

Naldrett said the original collection of today's Chesterfield Library came from the Trinity Library. The Trinity family started its library in the 1950s after several neighbors began asking to borrow books from their attic, according to a Detroit Free Press article from May 22,

1991, when the family announced plans to retire and sell the library property.

"It has been very satisfying seeing the library grow from its origins in the mall to its present building," Naldrett said.

Expanding to meet community needs

The current library facility is bigger in size, but is not easily visible from surrounding roadways.

"I think the community really appreciates having a library here, and what we can't get in terms of building perks, we try to get in terms of service," Lusardi said.

To accommodate the growing community, Lusardi said they focused on bringing programs and services that residents wanted, such as children's programming, music, magazines and movies. They also started a large-type collection that remains popular today.

"I'm really excited about how much we have done in a relatively short period of time," she said.

The library boasts a meeting room, children's room, young adult area and quiet area with tables for those who want to read or work on laptops. There are also several computers inside the facility, and Wi-Fi is available. The library also features a

selection of newspapers.

"We do carry the Macomb County Legal News, which I'm told isn't that easy to find in the area," the director said. "We have the New York Times in large print, as well. We have a pretty good little business collection here... it's good for a smaller library our size."

Additionally, she said the library's books on CD are a big hit among patrons.

"We can't keep these on the shelf," she said. "They're just so popular because we have a lot of commuters who live here and radio gets stale real fast."

The Chesterfield Township Library offers a variety of computer- and technology-based courses and workshops, in addition to relatively new online services for patrons to take advantage of.

Lusardi said the library was one of the first to offer OverDrive, which allows users to download books and audio books to their smartphones and tablets from the library. Since 2008, the li-

brary has seen more than 90,000 downloads from patrons using the service. Last year, the library began offering services through Zinio, which provides full digital copies of a wide variety of magazines. Next year, patrons will be able to use Freegal, an online music service.

"We're very aware of the technology and we try to keep up with it," Lusardi said.

A 'well-used' library

In a community of about 45,000 residents, the library has issued nearly 31,000 library cards to patrons since 1998, the director said.

"In 2009 when the economy fell, we gave close to 2,400 cards that year," she added. "People really made use of the library. We offered a lot; we did a lot of programming so people could come here and take advantage of free, interesting, entertaining programs."

Since 1994, the library has circulated more than 2.6 million books. More than 1.8

million visitors have come to the library in the past 10 years.

"We do the best we can with a very modest amount," Lusardi said. "It's a well-used library."

More than 67,000 people have attended the library's programs, Lusardi added.

"Every year we do summer reading and our summer reading programs are fantastic," she said. "We do craft programs that people like and book discussion groups that people really like."

"There's a real thirst in the community for continuing education and lifelong learning. That's what we do; that's what libraries do. The library is the university to the world."

The Chesterfield Township Library is located at 50560 Patricia Ave. For more information, call (586) 598-4900 or go to chellibrary.org.

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