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Rahway Public Library



ANNUAL REPORT



Rahway Public Library Annual Report 2017

Message from the President of the Board of Trustees

In 2017 the Rahway Public Library endeavored to accomplish its mission of serving the local community and beyond through a variety of programming, services and offerings that wholeheartedly embrace the new digital world, the varied diversity of interests of our library patrons and the value and love of literacy. Individuals who enter our library in search of media can find books on our shelves, graphic novels they can access through library apps, museum passes they can borrow, computers on which to hone skills and a discovery studio where they can learn something from local experts. Likewise, all that enter have access to knowledgeable librarians and staff who empower patrons to fully use the large variety of library services.

The Rahway Public Library also served our community by providing a Backpack Literacy Program, took part in Storytime on the Go and served as a hub and meeting place for multiple organizations to exchange and create ideas. This is only a tip of the iceberg as to what you will come across in our annual report. Looking forward into 2018, the library will continue its mission while exploring new ways to engage and serve the Rahway community.

Eric Miles, President

Message from the President of the Friends of the Rahway Public Library

Each year, the Friends of the Rahway Public Library foster and create relationships with community and local businesses in order to support and promote the Rahway Public Library. Hosting events such as the Amazing Rahway Race and the Progressive Dinner help raise funds for the Library while showcasing new restaurants and businesses within our local community. The Dodgeball Tournament brings family, friends, municipal organizations, houses of worship, and schools together for a fun, friendly, competitive, community building event to support the library. Our Annual Book Sale addresses the bibliophiles within our community while raising funds and getting residents well-stocked for summer reading. For some intrigue and flair, others participate in our Murder Mystery Dinner and Wine and Design events. All these events together give us the ability to fund a 'Friends of the Rahway Public Library College Scholarship', children's programming, the new Makerspace, and additional supplies and materials requested by the library.

Our active Friends group is small and as we move through 2018, a key goal is to grow membership and encourage active member participation. The Friends continues to meet each second Thursday at 7pm at the library. All are welcome and I encourage you to attend!

Joanna Miles, President

Changing Scene in Rahway

According to the American Community Survey 2016 from the US Census Bureau the total population of Rahway grew by about 6% from the 2010 Census to the present. The majority of the growth is among 25-45 year olds and children under the age of 5 years. The proportion of people identifying as 'white' and 'black/African-American' remains close to the same (50% white/32% black) but there are shifts in the Hispanic population reflecting an increase in general and in 'other' Hispanic groups. The largest census group represented overall is adult women, most hovering around the age of 40 years.

The survey reflects an increase in housing units of 200-300, presumably a result of city redevelopment efforts. The changing face of 'Main Street' businesses, the growth of community organizations, the focus on community events and life in the 'public square' are all responding to the new shape of Rahway.

Demographics and Library Use

The connection between library use and these findings is not a science. Some guiding principles emerge when you see that young adults and their young children are growing in number. That 27% of households have a senior citizen in residence. That 65% of households are families. 28% of households have children under 18 years. 30% of households are single adults living alone. We are guided by both numbers and experience that families and seniors are library users. We speculate on what produces the library's extraordinary computer usage statistics--and point to information seeking behavior and computer comfort among younger adults. This age group relies on services and quality of life provided by computer use such as banking, employment, shopping, social life.

Our programs and services are historically guided by these demographics but we can learn from even the small shifts that we see. Each year we tweak our services to be more responsive.

The Board plans to elicit community input in the coming year in assessing current and identifying future services.

Accomplishments/Highlights

This year was full of personnel changes. Half the staff are recent hires – within the last two or three years and the other half are employed over ten years. Recruiting to fill key positions was an important mission this year, requiring time and attention. Five positions were filled in 2017 – 25% of the staff.

Mark Lesniak made strides in library technology upgrades this year. The Accounting Office has its own network and all data was migrated into a multi-user QuickBooks platform. Staff computers were upgraded and reconfigured for incoming new staff. iPads have been set up for children and scanning implemented for adults. A new website was launched and social media promotion enhanced. Our open source circulation system was improved by Mark's developments and changes in circulation procedures followed.

Ken Dowzycki reports that the library's collection continues to change from a traditional hardcover book environment to a variety of formats and extensive computer use. Circulation of books continues to decline but use of electronic material continues to rise. We are shifting our dollars to focus on those information formats of interest to our community. We see a change in audiovisual interest as well. People are converting to downloadable materials and there is less interest in disc movies and music.

Discovery Studio is our new projects studio. Our team is still defining the program but want to continue to build a space for creativity and ongoing learning. This year we held monthly crafts and needlework projects but are looking for partnerships with a wide variety of 'experts' in our community to share their skills in the new space. The Friends have been a key support in developing this program.

Union County Freeholders again contributed a substantial grant to expand children's programs. There were programs in music and writing which set a high standard for us to continue in our service delivery. These are skills that go hand in hand with reading and build critical thinking skills.

Our Storytime program continues to focus on early literacy, building basic skills and encouraging families to practice at home. Our Literacy Backpacks (established through a previous Union County Grant) go home with families to assist them with reading at home. We have integrated music into storytime following our grant success with it.

Community Partners

We worked with many community partners this year in the delivery of outstanding services. These are some of them:

- **Friends** Museum Passes and Summer Reading, Youth Scholarship
- Black History Month programs in partnership with **local NAACP**
- **UCPAC** children's programs
- **Rahway Senior Center** for computer instruction
- **UC Freeholders** Children's programs
- **Rahway Arts and Business Partnership/Storytime on the Go, Rahway Day**

A host of organizations use the library as a meeting space, a classroom, a place to distribute resources and help, for cultural exchange, for community recognition and awards, for mentoring youth, and other services invaluable to the Rahway community. We take great care in registering people and groups to use the library meeting rooms, so that all of their activities benefit Rahway in a clear and identifiable way.

Staff Recognition

Our outstanding services start with our outstanding staff. All of our staff are accomplished. These are some highlights from the year:

Our children's programs were noted in an issue of School Library Journal and Liz Hoens was quoted.

Library Associate Tim Valente is a candidate for an ALA and an NJLA scholarship as he continues work on his MLS degree.

Access Services Manager Mark Lesniak is recognized throughout the state for his library technology and software development and is working with other libraries on a consulting basis.

Liz Hoens and Candy Toth hosted the Booklinx Publishers Book Evaluation Conference here as they do every year to review new publishing for youth with librarians from all over.

Liz Hoens and Gail Miller attended the ALA Annual Conference 2018 in Chicago and were swept up in the excitement of new ideas and inspirational speakers and programs.

Liz Hoens served on the NJ Statewide Summer Reading Committee and planned a program and deliverables for children statewide for summer literacy.

Norma Wine and Liz Hoens participated in Libraries of Union County Consortium to enhance library services in the county through sharing and exchange.

Lauren Thorne is the Liaison to the Friends and supports every event and fundraiser with logistics, social media and her own extensive community connections.

Our Board

Our board members each bring unique qualities to their volunteer service. Their oversight is key to the library's connection to the community.

Eric Miles works with our Friends' president, Joanna Miles, to organize significant fundraising events throughout the year and to secure sponsors and key community supporters. As president, he organizes the board and responds to community inquiries or concerns.

Derron Palmer is Vice President and works on financials as well as labor talks. He contributes his knowledge of local government and is a strong advocate for the library.

Melinda Rachlin has been a board member for twenty-one years and has served in many capacities. She is a staunch advocate for the library and shares her significant management expertise.

Vanessa Rozzelle has been on the board for twenty years and has served in every leadership role. She contributes to library programming and does significant advocacy and public relations in the community. Terry Benjamin has been on the board for fifteen years and organizes his network as a writer to provide notable forums and workshops for writers and filmmakers at the library.

Bill Rack has been on the board for eighteen years. He has been Treasurer most of that time and handles all board financial responsibilities with expertise. He provides solid financial stewardship.

Kim Hall is our Superintendent's representative. She brings her principal skills to the table and provides insight about children's and families' needs. She works on programs that connect the schools to the library and advocates for the importance of that connection.

The library and community are very fortunate to have stable, experienced and principled leadership on the board. As director, I am particularly grateful to have these exceptional people on board and look forward to more years together.

We have many 'irons in the fire' for 2018. The board is planning a community session and a library card public relations campaign. We are focusing on electronic resources, educational workshops for the public, space planning for our facility, and community participation.

We are grateful to the City of Rahway Administration and Council for their continuous support and to the many city agencies that work with us throughout the year.

Please see our web page at www.rahwaylibrary.org and our facebook and twitter feeds. We encourage you to participate – at the library – or through electronic forums. We are always happy to hear from you.

Gail Miller, Library Director