

Page 61:

The Newsletter of
Webster Groves Public Library, v. 3 n. 10,
June, 2008

Small Investment, BIG Return

My wife was born and raised in Hungary, and last month we had guests from Hungary for several days. Two of them were recent law school graduates looking for work in the U.S. They needed to work on résumés, they needed to look up job prospects, and they needed to study for the Bar Exam. I told them my library could help with all these things. They were almost shocked. Really? A public library in America does all this? Yes, I told them, and much more.

Among the things we take for granted in America (good roads, good parks, safe schools, cheap gas – yes, it's still *very* cheap by European standards), public libraries are one of the most valuable. For a tiny percentage of your total tax bill, you are presented a wide variety of services that people in other countries would die for.

In study after study researchers conclude that the public library provides just about the best return on investment of any tax-supported municipal or county service. A family of four only has to check out a few books a month that they then don't have to buy, and a few DVDs that they then don't have to rent, to get back a year's worth of investment in their library. Everything else is cream. Homework help for students. Story hours for toddlers. Poetry readings, book clubs, tax forms, voter registration, reference help, trained staff to help you use Microsoft Word, or set up an e-mail account, or learn how to use the World Wide Web – the list goes on and on. Maybe this is why, despite the occasional prediction by (largely uninformed) observers that libraries are on their last leg, most libraries across the country have gotten much busier in the last ten years. When times are tough, more people turn to their public library for many things they can't afford.

Webster Groves Public Library had an average of 474 visits per day last year. 11,500 people used our Internet terminals, nearly 3,000 people attended programs, and we checked out nearly 273,000 items, all on 1.8% of your annual tax bill. That's right, the library ranks below 'miscellaneous' in how much of your property tax goes to support it. I challenge anyone to show me any publicly-funded institution anywhere that serves so many people, that saves so much money for families, that makes such a difference in people's lives, that gets, in short, so much bang for so little buck.

Yes, when I think about it, it's pretty amazing what public libraries in America do. No wonder my Hungarian relatives are surprised. Other tax-supported institutions could learn a thing or two from the average public library.

tcooper@wgpl.org

June in the Children's Room



Sign up for Summer Reading Club
now through July 12th

This year's theme:

Catch the Reading Bug

Wednesday, June 11: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Thursday, June 12: Craft Time with Miss Phyllis – 3 pm

Wednesday, June 18: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Thursday, June 19: Craft Time with Miss Michelle – 3 pm

Wednesday, June 25: Storytime with Miss Phyllis – 10 am

Thursday, June 26: Craft Time with Miss Michelle – 3 pm

Monday, June 16 at 10 am

**Story of a Butterfly –
Presented by the Butterfly House**

First *My Fun Place* Program Lives up to Its Name

We held our first summer program for families of children with special needs on May 2nd. Kindermusic educator Nancy Love led a group of children and parents through musical games and exercises before reading stories about Fun Creatures in the Backyard. Parents and children all had a great time.

For more information about our My Fun Place programs, designed for children with autism, Down syndrome, ADD, ADHD or other mental or developmental disorders, please call 961-7262, or visit wgpl.org/kids.html.



Music Educator Nancy Love (with hands in the air) leads a group of parents and children in a fun musical game.

Library Hours

Monday-Thursday	9 am to 9 pm
Friday and Saturday	9 am to 4:30 pm
Sunday	2 pm to 5 pm

This Month's Most Requested Books:

1. *Phantom Prey*, John Sandford
2. *The Whole Truth*, David Baldacci
3. *A Change of Heart*, Jodi Picoult
4. *Sundays at Tiffany's*, James Patterson
5. *Careless in Red*, Elizabeth George
6. *The Front*, Patricia Cornwell
7. *Audition: a Memoir*, Barbara Walters
8. *Certain Girls*, Jennifer Weiner
9. *Where Are You Now?* Mary Higgins Clark
10. *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg Mortenson
11. *Compulsion*, Jonathan Kellerman
12. *A New Earth*, Eckhart Tolle

Next Month's Book Discussion Selection:

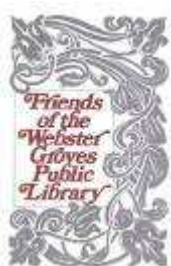
The Cleft, by Doris Lessing

Nobel Prize-winning novelist Lessing offers an alternative vision of the origin of the human race.

July 1 at 6 p.m. Call 961-3784 for information.

Staff Favorites: June, 2008

1. *Jukebox*, Cat Power (Adult CD)
2. *Charlie Wilson's War* (Adult DVD)
3. *The Orphanage* (Adult DVD)
4. *The Darjeeling Limited* (Adult DVD)
5. *Death at a Funeral* (Adult DVD)
6. *Odd Thomas*, Dean Koontz (Adult Fiction)
7. *Last Chinese Chef*, Nicole Mones (Adult Fiction)
8. *The Host*, Stephanie Meyer (Adult Fiction)
9. *West with the Night*, Beryl Markham (Adult Biography)
10. *Stick out Your Tongue*, Ma Jian (Adult Fiction)



Friends News

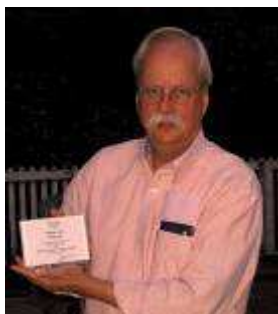
Book Fair Report

We are happy to announce that our 2008 Book Fair was a great success, with a profit of over \$10,000. Thank you to everyone who donated books and volunteered to help us. A book fair is a tremendous undertaking and cannot be done without the hard work of many people.

It is with some sadness and admittedly some relief that we also announce that we are not going to hold a book fair next year. The logistics of where to store and sort the books and hold the fair have become too difficult. We are also having trouble getting enough volunteers to do the heavy work of moving and sorting all the books prior to the fair. We are going to rethink our procedures, work to increase the number of volunteers, and find a way to make having a book fair a simpler, less stressful process.

We are also looking for new activities for the Friends, especially those activities that will enthruse and encourage more volunteers from the Friends membership. Suggestions include helping to maintain the garden areas of the library, participating in a homework help program after school, selling donated books on the Internet, staffing booths during local events such as the Jazz Festival, and helping out during library programs. We are also looking for ideas about fund raisers. If you would like to help us with any of those activities or have suggestions of your own, please let us know.

A Fond Farewell to Jon Furst



Jon Furst with his plaque from the Mayor

At its May meeting, the Webster Groves Public Library Board of Trustees bid farewell to long-time trustee Jon Furst, who has completed as many terms as the Board's by-laws will allow. Jon has served on the Board since May, 1998. He has been Board President since 2004. During his tenure the Webster Groves Public Library re-joined the Municipal Library Consortium, hired a new director, put a strategic plan in place, and worked to improve services despite deep budgetary constraints – a good time in office by any standard.

Webster Groves Councilmember Jeanne Kirkton presented Jon a plaque from Mayor Gerry Welch, thanking him for his years of voluntary service to the Webster Groves community.

Jon will be succeeded in the Board presidency by trustee Tom Reedy, but his resignation leaves a position open on the Board of Trustees. Anyone interested in volunteering to serve a three-year term should call library director Tom Cooper at 314 961-3784 for more information.



Webster Groves Public Library 301 E. Lockwood Webster Groves, MO 63119

(314) 961-3784 www.wgpl.org

A Member of the Municipal Library Consortium of St. Louis County