

Legacy *Matters*



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Smart Investment: The Importance of Valley Libraries



Libraries across the Valley region, like Seymour Public Library (above) and Plumb Memorial Library in Shelton (below) go beyond the books, providing programs of all kinds for residents of all ages to enjoy.



Derby Neck Library renovated its Teen Space (above) in 2013, accommodating up to 25 students. Most recently, it reorganized its Children's Room and improved its Reading Gazebo (below).



Derby Public Library provides special events and programs all year round, including traditional holiday celebrations (above) open to the entire community.

When was the last time you stepped into your local library?

As a resident of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, chances are you've been there recently, but not necessarily to borrow a book. Libraries across our region, and nationwide, are transforming into community resources for residents of all ages.

"We're no longer the 'Shush!' place. It's less about books and more about socialization for folks," explains Ian Parsells, Head Librarian at Derby Neck Library. "You have a lot of people who cannot leave their own community, so to not have a public library nearby is a crippling scenario."

In recent years, Derby Neck Library has added computers and free Wi-Fi to meet the needs of the community members who go there to do homework, look for a job, relax or socialize. With such a wide array of services, Parsells says it's apparent that libraries are still a vital aspect of community life.

"Libraries have sort of taken on the role of community centers," says Parsells, who has reduced some of the older book collections to increase seating for patrons, many of whom stay for the afternoon rather than simply check out a book and leave.

According to Elspeth Lydon, Shelton Library System Director, the Plumb Memorial Library has always been a common place to meet, particularly among those who are multi-lingual. While the library's physical location remains unchanged, the ways in which patrons access information has evolved.

"Every time new technology is introduced, whether it's the record players or filmstrip machines of the 20th century, to now offering Internet and remote access, we adapt," says Lydon. "With all this new technology, patrons can benefit from so many of the same great services, such as checking out e-books and even audiobooks online, without ever having to step foot in either our Plumb or Huntington Branch locations."

Derby Public Library Director Cathy Williams agrees that libraries have changing roles in the community, noting

that they often serve as warming centers in the winter, cooling centers in the summer and social service providers at times.

"We also participate in the CT Summer Food program, distributing lunch for school age children throughout the summer," Williams explains.

Dawn Higginson, Director at Oxford Public Library, says programming there has always centered around community engagement.

"We look for ways to integrate what we do best, connecting people with books and information, with events and programs happening in town," she says.

For example, the library recently partnered with the Oxford Historical Society to host a book-signing party of a book detailing the history and meaning of the stained glass windows in St. Peter's Episcopal Church in town. In the spring, the library will partner with newly opened RadArt, an Oxford-based craft studio, to create an art program for children and teens.

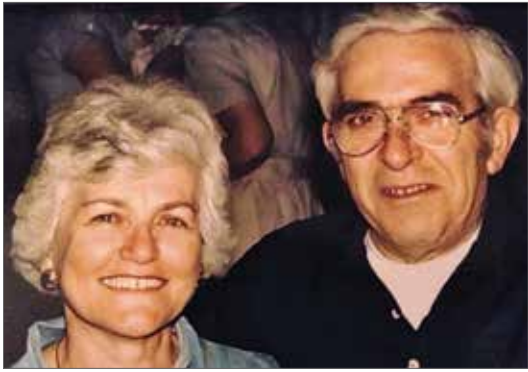
"The community aspect is much stronger here in the Valley compared to other parts of the state," says Seymour Public Library Director Suzanne Garvey. She says programming for adults has been a focus area for her staff, and recent historical programs and lectures have had a very positive response.

In the future, Garvey says she will be looking for ways to designate quiet space in the limited square footage they have, while also providing a more social space where folks aren't expected to be quiet.

Higginson, who is excited to see the Oxford Public Library move into its first stand-alone building in late 2017, sees much of the same community-building in the future of libraries.

"We're providing opportunities for people to meet, allowing them to learn from our materials and each other, using technologies as they evolve to gather information and share it," she says. "We're also providing for the needs of our communities in creative and imaginative ways."

Donor Spotlight: *Edward J. and Marie M. Cecarelli Book Fund*



Edward and Marie Cecarelli, at left, were both passionate about reading. At right, Marie Cecarelli stands by the painting she donated in memory of her husband as part of the Derby Public Library's 100th anniversary.

Edward and Marie Cecarelli both knew the value of books.

A life-long resident of Derby, young Edward was often found at the public library, studying Latin or reading a well-worn copy of *Moby Dick*.

When he and Marie married and settled in town to raise their family, she became a founding member of the Friends of the Library and served on the Board. She also ensured the Library's artifacts were preserved as part of its renovation, and was instrumental in the Library's recognition on the National Register of Historic Places, just in time for its 100th anniversary in 2002.

"Our father loved to read, as did our mother, which was one of many things they shared," remembers daughters MaryAnn Meyer and Melanie Cecarelli Smith. "Together they supported the library and passed their love of reading to their children."

The Edward J. Cecarelli Book Fund was established by Marie at the Valley Community Foundation when he passed away in 1996, to support the purchase of books at Derby Public Library. The name of the fund was amended by their children after her death in 2011, in order to honor both parents.

According to Library Director Cathy Williams, the funds are used predominately to purchase large print books, because that was a priority for Marie - ensuring that

Library patrons with vision problems still have a supply of reading materials.

"They understood the value of reading, but more importantly, the expanded resources that the Library provides to the community," Meyer says. "It is a haven for young readers – as it was for our father – who look to explore the world from a special reading corner of the library. But it is also a hub for book discussions, local history talks, films, preschool story time, tech help, teen programs and job search assistance."

"They understood the value of reading, but more importantly, the expanded resources that the Library provided to the community."

- MaryAnn Meyer

Ed recognized the important role of the Library in Derby through his own active service in the community during his lifetime, which included multiple terms as a city alderman and Mayor. All the services provided at

the Library are free.

"Libraries have become the great equalizer, providing services to all socio-economic groups," comments Williams, adding that the Derby Public Library offers free access to computers and Wi-Fi, as well as electronic databases for language learning and other tutorials. Patrons can stream or download music, movies and other media as well using subscription services the Library provides free of charge.

"The role of the library is far reaching and ever changing," explains Meyer. "The Book Fund is important to our family as it provides continued additional resources to the Library's budget, as well as to honor the legacy of our parents and their love of the Library."

Grant Deadlines

The Valley Community Foundation is accepting grant applications from nonprofits that serve its 5-town region covering Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, Shelton and Oxford. Grant amounts, application deadlines and eligibility requirements vary by grant process; details and applications are available on our website at www.valleyfoundation.org/grants.

Grant applications are now available on VCF's website for both Community and Responsive Grants. Grantseekers are encouraged to attend instructional workshop sessions provided by VCF in partnership with The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to learn more about the fundamentals of grantmaking.

For more information and to register, please contact Beth Colette at 203-751-9162 or bcolette@valleyfoundation.org.

Planned Giving

Your planned gift will impact the charities you're passionate about forever, regardless of the amount.

VCF welcomes Sharon L. Closius, Donald Warichar and Joseph Warichar to the Gates Society, the Foundation's planned giving community.

Call us at 203-751-9162 or learn more at www.valleyfoundation.org!

Good News About the Valley



Literacy Volunteers of Greater New Haven was the recipient of a 2014 Responsive Grant, jointly funded by VCF and its partner in philanthropy, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

In the year following that grant, Literacy Volunteers reported a doubling in the number of students in its Valley Program, thanks in part to a partnership developed with BHcare, at its Valley Social Club in Ansonia. The partnership has been so successful, it has been replicated at BHcare's Branford location.

"We continue to seek volunteer tutors in the Valley so that our Basic Literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs can reach more adult students," said Executive Director Donna Violante. "Training and support are provided and the experience is highly rewarding for volunteers, as they witness their students' improvement in reading, writing and conversational skills."

In 2015, Literacy Volunteers saw a measurable increase in the number of students achieving a four point gain or higher from pre- to post-testing reading level.



The mosaic floor of the Ansonia Public Library's main entrance on South Cliff Street has a fresh new look, after a restoration project that took place during the summer of 2015.

With the help of a VCF 2015 Needs and Opportunities Grant to support the restoration, the Friends of the Ansonia Library funded the replacement and repair of tiles by John Cavaliere of Lyric Hall Antiques and Conservation. He had previously restored the building's clock tower and water fountain, located on the front lawn.

The beautiful depiction of the winged horse, Pegasus, and Bellerophon of Greek mythology is surrounded by a series of geometric designs in red, yellow, white and black stone and even some glass. The mosaic has been the centerpiece of the entryway since the Library opened in 1890.

Special thanks to Greg Stamos, who also helped support the project with grants from his donor advised funds at VCF. He and his father, Peter Stamos, were in attendance at the rededication ceremony held at the Library in October.