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Library sees big campaign bucks

By Hilary Dickinson
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The Beloit Public Library raised \$1.5 million as part of its initial fundraising campaign.

This successful completion of the “Say Hello to the New Beloit Public Library” capital campaign comes approximately one year after the library moved to its current location at 605 Eclipse Blvd.

“The first fundraising call I did was 14 months ago,” said Nancy Forbeck, a fundraising committee member. “That was such a terrible time to be raising money so it really makes the whole success of this something to be thrilled about.”

Forbeck said she and the rest of the fundraising committee are thankful for the tremendous generosity of local businesses, foundations and individuals who made the campaign a success.

They are particularly grateful for the support from the Hendricks Family Foundation (\$500,000), the Beloit Foundation (\$250,000), the Beloit Public Library Foundation (\$250,000), Kerry Ingredients Inc. (\$75,000), Regal Beloit Corporation (\$50,000), and the Neese Family Foundation (\$50,000).



The City of Beloit paid \$7.7 million for the construction of the new facility, but the \$1.5 million went toward the furniture, fixtures and equipment including 46 new computers.

The public library board is now turning to the Beloit community to finish the campaign.

The new facility has seen the number of visitors increase by more than a third, and the library board and committee want to make sure the library is well-equipped.

“We’re thrilled, but also know we have to pay attention and make sure we’re servicing everyone as well as we can,” Forbeck said.

In addition to the increase in visitors, program attendance is also up several-fold over last year, according to a library press release. Seventy-two percent of the area population also holds a library card, which is well above the national average of 62 percent.

Thus, the objective of this final phase of the fundraising campaign is to continue to be able to carry good books and electronic equipment for its visitors, Forbeck said. The campaign also will allow for additional signage, collection materials, computers and art displays, according to the press release.

“The public phase of a capital campaign is the grass roots effort to get as many people involved as possible,” Steering Committee Chair Ken Forbeck said in the press release. “With the increase in cardholders and usage, almost everyone in the Beloit area either uses or knows someone who uses this new facility, it is an incredible asset to the community.”

The new facility has allowed the library to double in size and offer a variety of improvements including a large public meeting room, an enhanced children's programming room and garden, an area dedicated to teens, a greatly expanded computer center and classroom, and an enclosed reading room containing a fireplace.

Though the Beloit Public Library was established in 1895, the first library building was built in 1903 and this new facility is the third building in the history of the organization.

People can donate to the campaign by mailing a check to the Beloit Public Library (Capital Campaign), 605 Eclipse Blvd., Beloit, WI, 53511 or by donating online using any major credit card. Log on to www.beloitlibrary.info and click on the donate button on the home page.

For more information call the Beloit Public Library Business Manager at 608-364-2908.