

Library Report

Compiled by Ian White



Staff profile

Marguerite Thibault

When one thinks of the Weymouth Branch Library it is almost impossible not to think of its long-serving Library Clerk III Marguerite Thibault. She will celebrate 29 years of service to Western Counties Regional Library on July 6, 2010.

"I liked the thought of working in a quiet atmosphere," Marguerite says of her reason for seeking work with the library. "My hobby is reading; therefore, to have access to all these books so close to me was a plus."

Her favourite part of the job is working with the public.

"I have met so many wonderful people from all over the world," she says. "I have enjoyed helping school age children find information they needed for their projects, finding that 'good book' that patrons are looking for, visiting schools, group homes and seniors."

Over the years, she has seen many changes take place at the library but none greater than the arrival of computers and the increasing use of information technology.

"In 1981, all clerical work was done with pen and paper, now it is done with the click of a mouse," Marguerite says.

She believes that the biggest challenge facing the library is attracting more people through its doors. During these tough economic times, particularly in Weymouth, the library offers many free services and resources. A lack of consistent funding also concerns her.

Despite tough times, the community of Weymouth is very excited about the new Weymouth library that is expected to open later this spring, she says.

"Everyone is commenting on how huge and beautiful the new library is," she says.



From left, Immigration Information Navigator Andrew Pace, West Nova MP Greg Kerr and Western Counties Regional Library Coordinator Deborah Duke discuss the Seniors Mentoring Newcomers project. Kerr announced on Jan. 6 that the project would receive \$25,000 from New Horizons for Seniors program.

Seniors to mentor newcomers

A Western Counties Regional Library project to increase the retention of newcomers in the region and enable the active participation of area seniors as mentors for newcomers has received \$25,000 in federal funding to establish the mentoring program.

The regional library received the grant on Jan. 6 to implement its Seniors Mentoring Newcomers in conjunction with the South West Shore Development Authority's Immigration Information Navigator.

The money is being used to get the project up and running with the goal of making it self-sustaining, says Deborah Duke, project coordinator for the regional library.

"We expect results within the first six months," Duke says, adding that the project has begun.

The funding is being used to hire the trainer/program developer, Yvette Armstrong who starts March 22; purchase necessary equipment such as a laptop computer; cover training costs; and create a self-sustaining project. Once a pool of volunteers is trained, some will be able to continue to train new volunteers to enable the program to be ongoing.

Volunteers commit to a minimum of six months service to the program. All the volunteers will be seniors who will use their skill and experience to mentor newcomers to the region and to train new volunteers. The service will cover Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties, Duke says.

"We're hoping to start with a core group of maybe 20 volunteers," she explains.

The program is overseen by a volunteer committee of five people, Immigration Information Navigator Andrew Pace, Duke, David Saxton, John MacDonald and John Sollows.

Writer-in-Residence program surpasses expectations

There have been 155 one-on-one mentoring sessions since September

Western Counties Regional Library Writer-in-Residence program began with a full house during its open house in September and has never slowed down.

"I think it has been a very successful program," says Deborah Duke, coordinator of the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Library in Yarmouth. The Yarmouth library is the base for writer-in-residence Sandra Phinney. The Yarmouth County freelance writer has written two books and her articles have appeared in over 60 Canadian and American publications.

Duke commends Phinney for her planning and organization of the program and her ability to match the programming with the needs of her participants.

Booking software coming to Yarmouth, Digby

Computer users at the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Library in Yarmouth will be able to book their own computer time by the end of March and later this spring at the Digby branch.

"Patrons will be able to book their own computer time, and the software will ensure equal computer access for all," says Deborah Duke, coordinator for the Yarmouth library.

Once the software is in place, patrons can use their library card and PIN to log in. The process is very user-friendly, says Duke, adding staff will be available to demonstrate how to use the booking software.

"You will still be able to book a computer by phone by calling the branch staff, if you can't get into the library," she says.

The advantage to the patrons is they can log in to any available computer without signing in at the circulation desk, and they can book a computer up to a week in advance. The computer will save their spot if they have to leave temporarily during a session.

The benefit to staff, Duke says, is it reduces the time spent signing people in for computer sessions, allowing staff to spend more time assisting other patrons.

'Time for a collective hug.'
- Sandra Phinney, *Writer-in-Residence*

Following an open house that attracted close to 60 people to the program, Phinney had 53 mentoring sessions in September alone – by far her busiest month. By the end of February, 218 people had taken part in the monthly seminars covering everything from getting a book published to editing. There were 16 participants at a full-day workshop, and there had been 155 one-on-one mentoring sessions. The program is due to wind down at the end of June.

"The program has encouraged a lot of people to try out their writing skills," says Duke. There have been many successes among the participants including some who have had their works published.

The undertakings of the participants have impressed Phinney. She has logged an extensive list of their accomplishments, ranging from entering competitions to having articles and stories published.

"Time for a collective hug," she says.

This project was funded through Commonwealth of Writers: Our Writers/Our Libraries, administered through the Writers Federation of Nova Scotia, and Western Counties Regional Library.

Staffing Updates



Western Counties Regional Library Chair Gary Archibald presents Regional Director Trudy Amirault with a certificate commemorating her 35 years of service to the library on Friday, Jan. 8 at Headquarters in Yarmouth. She began working at the library on Jan. 10, 1975.

Jade Malone-Ross, Barrington Library Reserve, left her position on Oct. 15, 2009.

Public Relations Manager Ian White received a five-year service certificate Feb. 4, 2010.