

## LIBRARIES GET CREATIVE, INVOLVE COMMUNITIES TO RAISE FUNDS

*by Denise Canady*

**L**ibrary staff members bank on creative fundraising efforts to raise needed funds from their communities. Special events such as food festivals or silent auctions help bring in money at some libraries, while soup suppers, equipment/yard sales, and even art classes are successful fundraisers at others. In the last few years, libraries have received less funding from property taxes – and more changes are expected with new property tax laws going into effect. Additionally, costs of library materials, like everything else, continue to rise.

### FOOD EVENTS

At Culver-Union Township Public Library in Culver, staff members work to coordinate a “Taste of Culver” event each year. The event earns about \$4,500 each year, said director Carol Jackson. Culver-Union serves 3,100 patrons. It seemed like a natural fund-raising idea, Jackson said, with the town of Culver on a lake packed with restaurants. For the event, held the second week in July, the street in front of the library is blocked off to make way for restaurants featuring food specials under canopied tents. People use pre-paid tickets to buy the food. A jazz band has performed during the event the last few years, and this year a different variety of music is planned, she said. Coca-Cola products and ice are donated for the event, and a local printing company used scrap paper to make the Taste of Culver tickets for a nominal printing fee, Jackson said.

Meanwhile, the Ladoga-Clark Township Library in Ladoga, and the Boswell Public Library in Boswell, boast successful soup suppers. Everything is donated for each library’s event except paper goods and plasticware. The Ladoga Library makes about \$1,000 from an annual Souper Bowl soup supper in the library’s community room. “It’s a big social event for the people of Ladoga,” said library director Wanda Bennett. Souper Bowl goers receive soup, crackers, a dessert and a beverage for a donation. There’s also a children’s meal: hot dog, chips, cookie and a drink. “One year, there were 22 different kinds of soup or chili,” Bennett said. The library’s Friends group do-

nates desserts, crackers and other fixings. The Souper Bowl usually starts at 5 p.m., and “we go until it’s gone,” Bennett said. The second year of the Souper Bowl, a cookbook of the previous year’s entrees was sold for under \$5. About 25 cookbooks were available at the fundraiser, and a waiting list was generated so that library staff members could make more copies. The Boswell Public Library makes about \$1,500 each October for the summer reading program from its chili and vegetable soup supper at the local senior center. The menu features the soup and chili, and includes peanut butter sandwiches, hot dogs, desserts, tea, lemonade, and water. The six-member Friends of the Library group has “regulars” donate food – but as it gets closer to time for the fundraiser, others always offer to donate items as well, said director Andrea Bowman. To get ready for the event, library staff members prepare mailings for support and make follow-up calls. A Rotary group sets up tables, and library staff members work the event along with the Friends of the Library members.

### SILENT AUCTIONS

At North Madison County Public Library in Elwood, computer and other office supply sales regularly bring in a sizeable dollar amount. “It’s really helped us a lot — especially when the budget is tight,” said Sarah McElfresh, the library’s information technology man-



Taste of Culver Event

ager. The staff sells outdated computer and related equipment in public silent auctions. People put in silent bids on items, and may leave at the end of the one-day sale with a 4-year-old computer for \$150, McElfresh said. There are no minimum or maximum bids. But McElfresh declares that people haven't taken advantage of that. "Let's just say I've never been disappointed in the dollar amount bid for an item," she said. The desktop computers go for as little as \$20 but may bring as much as \$250. The sales, held in the library's meeting room, occur during regular hours and coincide with the area's annual glass festival in August. "We set up all the computers so they're working and people can test them," McElfresh said. The library serves 21,000 patrons. And at the Culver-Union library, staff members are gearing up for a new fund-raising event — an ABC Auction — planned for the first weekend of August. At the black-tie affair, people will be able to place silent bids on favorite books that are Autographed By Celebrities, Carol Jackson said.

### **YARD SALES**

The Ladoga-Clark Township Public Library receives about \$850 each year from a yard sale its Friends group coordinates the first weekend in June, said director Wanda Bennett. "We put the word out and people in the community bring items in without fail. My community room is a wreck for about a month," she said. "Folks ask about it as early as January!"

### **A RUSHVILLE TRADITION**

The Rushville Public Library in Rushville, raises from \$2,200 to \$2,300 for its summer reading program from area business and organization donations, said director Sue Otte. Early each year, the staff sends out a letter asking for support. Soon after, checks come in to the library in the self-addressed, stamped envelopes that were part of the original mailing. In addition, the library receives an estimated \$500 in donated prizes from area merchants, Otte said. Rushville's library



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serves about 6,200 patrons. For the summer reading program, every adult gets a donated door prize, and all children who complete the program earn a \$10 department store gift card. A party at the conclusion of the program is geared for adults and the door prizes are awarded at the event, which is held at the school administration building, Otte said.

### **ARTIST GIVES BACK**

To help raise funds for the summer reading program at the Henry Henley Public Library in Carthage, Denise Akers gives part of the earnings from her popular china painting classes to the library. Akers hosts the 6-week classes at the library for adults and children to paint pre-glazed teapots or other china. Akers fires the pieces at her home office. The class brings in at least \$50 a year to the library, said library assistant Denise Walker. The Henry Henley Library serves about 1,000 patrons.

### **BOOK AND BAKE SALES**

Twice a year, the Ladoga Library coordinates book and bake sales that benefit the adult and summer reading programs, Wanda Bennett said. Proceeds from the book sales go to the Friends group, and the bake funds go to the adult book discussion group. "If our little town can do it, anyone can!"

### **CONCLUSION**

With a little creativity, your library can earn needed funds while offering events that community members can't wait to participate in. The ideas are endless, but experienced library staff members say that organization is the key to successful fundraisers — and getting community buy-in helps events "sell" themselves while fostering library pride.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Denise Canady is the new children's librarian at Cambridge City Public Library. Her skills from past posts in the public relations and journalism fields qualify her to wear several hats on the library's small staff. And she can't think of anything better to surround herself with than books! When not at the library, Denise is a freelance writer, wife, mother, and community volunteer.