

## **Daniel Boone Regional Library Minutes, Meeting of October 22, 2024**

### **Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Determination**

Margrace Buckler, President, called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

Daniel Boone Regional Library (DRBL) Board members present were Margrace Buckler, Dorothy Carner, Seth Christensen, Tonya Hays-Martin, Cori Miller, Lisa Finn, Pat Powell, Shannon Alvis, and Mary Fennel. Jean Howard, Travis Pringle, Jennifer Rodewald, Jacqueline Kelly and Nate Sutfenfield were absent.

Also in attendance was DBRL Interim Executive Co-Director Erin Magner as well as DBRL managers Jim Smith, Karen Crago, Mitzi St. John, Joe Facticeau, Lauren Williams, Sheryl Bucklew, Amanda McConnell, other members of library staff, and members of the public.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Erin Magner Presentation**

*Each candidate received the prompt, “present a specific innovative program you’ve implemented at a previous library that addressed a specific challenge in libraries today and how it emphasized growth, innovation, and positive change,” to define the topics of their presentations. The order of presentations was determined by alphabetical order.*

Margrace welcomed Erin Magner, who introduced herself as the current Associate Director of Public Services at DBRL. Erin continued on to introduce her presentation entitled, “Connecting Through Technology: Expanding Digital Access During a Crisis,” which highlighted an initiative she helped establish at the Richmond Heights Public Library (a part of the Municipal Library Consortium) in her previous role there as the Library Director. Erin shared that during the Covid-19 pandemic, libraries became critical providers for patrons needing internet and digital access, thus she and her team and the Richmond Heights Public Library adopted a three-part technology initiative aimed at keeping the community connected despite limited physical access using grant funding to provide new chromebooks, WiFi expansion, and promote eMedia.

Erin shared that the goals of the program were to increase internet access and eMedia for seniors, students, job seekers, and under resourced patrons; bridge the digital divide to keep people connected through physical isolation; and foster community resilience by offering digital tools for remote learning, programs, job searching and connecting to loved ones. She added that the first step in this initiative was identifying the people they

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serve and their unique needs during that time. She and her team then implemented their ideas for providing these resources by securing an LSTA Tech Grant for her library and an ARPA eMedia Grant for the consortium as well as by purchasing chromebooks and WiFi access points to extend the building's WiFi to the exterior of the building and parking lot. Erin noted that hotspots were not eligible for purchase under the LSTA grants for this year, thus they were not able to provide them for check out. These improvements allowed patrons to have access to WiFi from the outside of the building even after library hours and gave more patrons the ability to check out chromebooks to work and stay connected to family and friends.

Erin reported that the outcomes seen from this program were 50% of the chromebooks checked out within the first month, positive feedback from the patrons, and an increase in online engagement including eMedia and website visits. Moreover, through this program, the Richmond Heights Public Library was able to reinforce its role as an essential community hub even during a critical time in history.

### **Robin Westphal Presentation**

Margrace then welcomed Robin Westphal who is currently the Missouri State Librarian within the Missouri Secretary of State Office. Robin introduced herself, as well as her presentation entitled "Integrating Social Workers into Reference Services," a program she oversaw as the director of the Johnson City Public Library in Tennessee. Robin began her presentation with a quote from the book *Palace for the People* by Eric Klinenburg, sharing "The library assumes the best out of our people. The services it provides are founded upon the assumption that if given the chance, people will improve themselves," which Robin explained has shaped a lot of what she has striven to do as Missouri's State Librarian and is certainly applicable to this program as well.

Robin shared that, much like Columbia, Johnson City is considered an oasis within a larger geographic area that is otherwise a desert when it comes to services for those, nearly 700 people, experiencing homelessness. She explained that while there were many services aimed at assisting these individuals, not everyone was being served for a variety of reasons, namely, a lack of trust of agencies was a large issue. Robin explained that being located near many of these agencies, the Johnson City Public Library served as a referral source, but that staff was not trained to aid patrons in crisis or in handling situations in which these vulnerable people were in danger. Robin shared that the Johnson City Public Library collaborates with various social service agencies and city and county departments, including the Appalachian Regional Coalition on Homelessness, to provide services and address challenges faced by downtown merchants. Additionally, she was personally involved in a rotary group that included an

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advisor for the East Tennessee State University Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) program. Together, Robin and these two groups came up with the idea of offering the library as a place for students' practicum experience. In addition to providing them the opportunity to fulfill their educational requirements, they also got to work the reference desk and gain additional valuable experience.

Robin explained that the goals of this program were to address a community need by taking away the barriers preventing those in need from services, reduce disruptive instances by allowing social work interns to work with staff to de-escalate situations without the need of assistance from security forces, and to create a cooperative learning experience between the social work students who learned the importance of libraries as safe spaces and reference staff who learned how to better assist vulnerable patrons. Robin also shared the timeline of this project which began in June of 2017 when she started at the Johnson City Public Library and saw its launch with two interns starting in January of 2018. Robin shared that by March of 2018, de-escalation training for all staff had been provided by the Homeless Training Institute, the interns and reference staff were comfortable providing information about referral agencies, and the trust from the vulnerable patrons increased. Robin shared that one of their staff members even decided to pursue a MSW degree in addition to their library degree.

Robin shared that the key takeaway from this project was that while it addressed a need, the service model needed to be adjusted to make it sustainable. They found that conducting the social service interviews required more privacy than the reference desk allowed and that scheduling with interns was difficult due to their busy schedules. Ultimately, the decision was made that the need for a dedicated social worker was so great that they hired their own.

### **Other Business**

None.

### **Board Comments/Announcements**

None.

### **Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Margrace Buckler adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Emily Camden.

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Jennifer Rodewald, Board Secretary