

**To: Robert Geckle, President, Cyrenius H. Booth Library Board of Trustees**  
**From: Brenda McKinley, Library Director**  
**Memo: Director's Annual Report – Fiscal Year 2015-2016**  
**Date: July 1, 2016**

Fiscal Year 2015-2016 was a year with challenges and opportunities. A major challenge was the continued recovery from the February 2015 flood event which took a tremendous commitment of staff resources to successfully complete. While the flood recovery was a finite project with a defined end goal, the greatest opportunity of this past year came in the form of an updated strategic plan, which is by comparison an open process. There is no end goal here but rather the recommitment by the Library to meeting the needs of our community. Many of these needs cannot be anticipated today. For example, we have seen great changes in technologies that lead to shifts in what those needs may be. It is exciting to know that in the past fiscal year the C.H. Booth Library made the investment to understand the aspirations of our community for its future and to know that the Library has an important role in support of that future vision.

### **Monthly Highlights:**

Details can be found in the individual department reports. Brief monthly highlights include:

- July 2015: the busiest month of the year with an average of 572 visitors per day. Summer Reading was in full swing with many programs and thousands of books read by all ages. Staff still worked to recover from the February 2015 flood, ordering books and reconciling invoices for the 10,500+ books destroyed in the flood. STEM workshops, creative writing.
- August 2015: a grant application to create a studio for chbMAKERS corner was submitted to the CT State Library; Trane began HVAC upgrades which continued for a few months; Mathieu Cailler presented an author talk; a second 3D printer was purchased; Summer Reading wrapped up with many prizes awarded.
- September 2015: the carpeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor reference area was replaced; book discussions picked back up; space was made in the chbMAKERS corner by shifting collections and removing shelving; a Voices of Poetry program welcomed poets, programs on Medicare and art appreciation; Story Time sessions started back up; popular programs included Books & Legos and Lego WeDos; Young Adult Council welcomed new members.
- October 2015: landscape beautification with volunteer clean-up days; meditative yoga programs; Halloween projects for all ages; early morning 7<sup>th</sup> grade tours; business outreach; Reader of Minds mystified a packed audience; the library was transformed into a life-size CandyLand to welcome trick-or-treaters; Reference staff participated in state library "Access to Justice" training on legal resources; the YA department spearheaded a library Instagram challenge.

- November 2015: the handicap driveway and parking area was repaved; the library welcomed over 300 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual chbMAKERS Open House; the weather cooperated for the most successful Turkey Trot 5K to date; a popular NASA program reached for the stars; the library received notice that our grant application was successful; welcomed students from Bridgeport school for a historic tour
- December 2015: Andy and Brenda did a presentation at Chamber breakfast presenting resources and programs to support the business community; a full crowd enjoyed the annual gingerbread house workshop; the Library was a stop for the annual Newtown Holiday Festival which was the same weekend as the Friends successful Holiday Sale; the Board of Trustees decided to hire Maxine Bleiweis & Associates as our strategic planning consultants – a timeline of Jan 4, 2016 through June 30, 2016 was established for the creation of a community needs-based strategic plan; after months of hard work the new library website was launched, the new website has a simplified, mobile device-friendly interface; holiday crafts and music programs for all ages rounded out the month
- January 2016 – Andy organized a Business Open House with the Economic Development Coordinator and Commission highlighting business resources, Andy also began the monthly Brown Bag Business hour series with speakers geared toward the small business owner and a chance for networking; over 70 elegant attendees enjoyed the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Downton Abbey Tea; a terrific LittleBits workshop series taught by young adult volunteers was a great success; Children’s department programming picked back up after the holidays; we began the community data gathering piece of the strategic planning process with focus groups dates and locations set and survey launched, a focus groups for the entire staff was conducted, community Planning Committee was established with meeting dates set, Board and Staff Work Group was established with meeting dates set, in-depth telephone interviews were scheduled with key community members; on the back office side staff attended training from the CT Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities; changes to the state library’s interlibrary loan delivery service began causing real problems for all libraries around the state
- February 2016 – the library celebrated Take Your Child to the Library Day; popular lectures by Dr. Mark Schenker highlighted the novels of the Bronte sisters; library staff attended the school district’s kindergarten orientation night, creating library cards on the spot; training and programs in the chbMAKERS were full; the community needs assessment portion of the strategic planning process continued in full swing
- March 2016 – we celebrated the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Battle of the Books; for the strategic planning process, library service responses were established through the community needs assessment results; Vision Projects for 2016 were submitted to the Friends of the Library; the State Bond Commission approved the release of the library’s chbMAKERS studio grant allowing for the signing of the contract with the state library

- April 2016 – final insurance paperwork was completed for the February 2015 flood recovery; many programs occurred including music, puppets, and movement for the very young, STEM programs, a discussion of the Hudson River School, hiking the Appalachian Trail, fly-tying, the story of a Korean War Horse, and even the start of a weekly Adult Coloring club for socializing and stress reduction; a new Mission Statement for the library was approved by the Board of Trustees; MB&A consultants met with the full staff to develop a list of specific activities to meet each Goal and Objective established to meet the service priorities identified in the strategic planning process; staff attended the Connecticut Library Association’s annual meeting in Hartford; planning began for the 2016 Turkey Trot
- May 2016 – the library celebrated small business week with programs and webinars; gap analysis work was completed on the nearly 200 planned activities to meet the Strategic Planning Goals and Objectives; the draft of the Strategic Plan was presented to the community Planning Committee; Maxine Bleiweis presented a full staff customer service training; we participated in the annual “Passports to CT Libraries” statewide initiative; program highlights include book publishing, mindfulness training, a technology fair for seniors, group tours and training in chbMAKERS and library tours; our Children’s Librarian also made guest visits to schools
- June 2016 Summer reading kicked off on June 20<sup>th</sup> with magic and games; the draft Strategic Plan was presented to the full Board of Trustees; tours for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students and teachers were held; with much anticipation the *New Stories for Newtown* book featuring work by local students alongside professional authors and illustrators was launched; art appreciation included hands-on art classes for adults along with maker programming in the form of basic home electrical repairs; the book discussion and writing groups met; as has been the case all year Mother Goose, music, and hands on programming for the very young have been full of enthusiastic participants; our Young Adults have been busy with STEM programs and filling up the Summer Reading raffle boxes with tickets from their reading; and a circulating game collection was launched and is proving to be very popular.

While much has been accomplished this past year, I look forward to the upcoming fiscal year and the excitement it will bring as we set out on implementing our strategic plan. I thank the Board for their leadership and commitment to the importance of a strategic plan based on community needs along with all the Newtowners who participated through serving on the Planning Committee, filling out the survey, participating in a focus group, or taking the time for an in-depth telephone interview. Thanks to the Friends for their support and participation and thanks to the staff for being an integral part of each step in the strategic planning process. It is very clear that the library staff is our greatest asset and that the care and dedication they bring to their work is what makes the C.H. Booth Library such a special place. I am grateful to be able to

work with this group of professionals with renewed commitment to meet the needs of the entire Newtown community as embodied in the library's new Mission Statement:

*The Cyrenius H. Booth Library's mission is to promote the joy of lifelong learning, stimulate curiosity, support the exchange of ideas, and provide a welcoming gathering place for our community.*