



2022 Library Visit Interview Form

Library Name: Nekoosa-Charles & JoAnn Lester Library

Certification Grade: 1

Date of visit: 9/21/2022

Library staff present at the visit: Darla Allen

SCLS staff present: Heidi Oliverson

Amount of time spent at visit: 2.0 hours

[Please limit this section to the answers to the specific questions, and include as much detail as possible. Report other information or observations in the “other information” section below.]

1. How are you and your staff doing?

Staff are doing pretty well now. Over the last year, they have had to deal with many illnesses, some severe and recurring, outside of COVID. Darla has had COVID, multiple pneumonias and hospital stays since last fall. Other staff have also been dealing with family issues, deaths and illnesses but overall they are working very well as a team, covering shifts and making sure that the library remains open, the work gets done and the patrons are able to get materials and use the library services. Darla worked with another community member to get grants and other donations in support of the Wisconsin Rapids Boxing Club. They received \$35,000 from the local Legacy Foundation and others donations helped to gain them a total slightly over \$50,000 for the club. It is now housed in the old Port Edwards YMCA. They have set up an endowment fund that will help to continue to pay rent for the building. Other funds will go to updating the equipment for the members.

Last year Darla went to WAPL in May and contracted an upper respiratory infection. She decided against going to WLA last year and is looking forward to going to the conference this November in Lake Geneva.

The estate of Georgine Buehler (raised in Nekoosa and returned to live there for the last five years) left the library \$99,800 dollars. This is a boon as their municipal appropriation was cut by \$16,000 during the 2019-2020 budget year (due to the County increase of \$16,000) but that amount has not been restored to their budget despite promises. Hope their budget is not cut further due to this bequest.

2. What are the next projects (big or small) on your library's to-do list?

With the Buehler bequest, they were able to replace their water heater and two of their air conditioning units. They also moved the thermostat to the staff room instead of being in the tiny meeting room. This has been a great help to keep the temperature more even and consistent throughout the building. They are also updating the children's play area – getting a new 72 inch playhouse and updating the children's kitchen set. These are in the library so children can play on

and with them throughout the year. A large amount of the bequest is being set aside for a new roof.

They are also updating their shelving to change how they provide access to DVDs. They previously kept the discs behind the desk and had the cases, with copies of the cover art, set out in boxes for the patrons to browse. This was a practice started several years ago due to a couple incidences of theft. But they realized that this is more work for staff and less ease of access for patrons so they are changing back to keeping the discs in their cases and shelving them as such. This will take some time to convert but think that this winter they might get quite a lot done.

They were unable to do their normal holiday event for children due to staffing issues but they are ready for this year. Santa comes to the library and gives the children a holiday-themed book and some candies. Last time they held this they had more than 50 children attend; they are glad to be able to do this again.

3. Are there service changes or new services from the last two years that you plan on continuing?

The library re-opened to normal operations quickly after lockdown was lifted. They are still providing curbside for patrons and encouraging some of their less-abled patrons to use this or their "delivery" service. During the winter month, they encourage patrons with mobility issues and winter driving issues to call and request materials for delivery. Darla or Teri will deliver to their home. But many patrons prefer to come in and visit as well as browse for materials

Nekoosa Academy contacted Darla about delivering bins of books to the local nursing home. The library hasn't provided this service since before the pandemic due to lack of interest. High school students at the Academy are interested in re-starting this program, possibly working one-on-one with residents to get the types of materials they are interested in. Darla will be meeting with the group next week to discuss the options and set-up a plan.

4. How can SCLS help?

Nekoosa has a BlueJeans subscription (from CARES ACT grant funding?). Is it possible to switch to or get a Zoom subscription if possible? Staff find Zoom easier to use and more of their users seem to be more familiar with Zoom than BlueJeans. **ACTION-** ask Jean Anderson or Marty Van Pelt about how this was funded and if this subscription for libraries is going to be continued. And if they can get Zoom instead. (Blue Jeans will continue through the state. They cannot trade Blue Jeans for Zoom)

Darla had talked to Craig Ellefson about a virtual meeting set-up (laptop, microphone and TV)for their library before she got so sick last year. She is ready to re-start that conversation and find out what needs to happen or be purchased. They would also like to extend the WiFi to cover the parking lot (They have some money to purchase additional units). **ACTION-**send information to Craig

Can SCLS or WiLS get a subscription to Newspapers.com? Darla purchases that herself for her library. Could SCLS staff investigate this in the hopes that other libraries may be interested and possibly getting a lower, discounted rate if such was available for large group subscription? She thinks the cost for Nekoosa is about \$20.00 per month but will

have to check. **ACTION**-send to Jean or Marty to ask who would manage this request. (Newspapers.com is free for all public libraries via Badgernet).

5. Is there anything else you'd like to share or discuss?

Local lifetime sexual offender was released back into the Nekoosa community last summer with no public notice and no restrictions. When she was made aware of it last November, Darla started talking to local community authorities and helped to get an ordinance passed in April 2022 to bar sexual predators from the library, schools, nearby hiking trails, the splash pad at the park and other locations where young children might regularly be located. She has informed local residents and other nearby libraries and communities of this issue and to be aware that he is mobile. Apparently, many small communities don't Oldenburghave these types of ordinances in place unless it has already been a concern that they have had to address.

Looking forward to WLA at Lake Geneva.

Other information gathered at the visit (interesting tidbits, general impressions of the library, or alternative topics):

Darla is very integrated in her community and very knowledgeable about various resources that can assist, educate and aid her community members. She has many networks of connections in this community and other nearby communities. She told me a couple of stories about helping high school graduates with post-high school college and work/study opportunities. She recently helped a young woman get into a nearby 5-week CNA training program that provides a stipend and a full year employment opportunity after successfully completing the course. If all goes well, there is another program that Darla knows of that will help fund this person into a nursing program, if that is the route she wants to take.

Darla is an incredible resource!

Forgot to write down that Darla very much appreciates the help she gets from all of the SCLS staff. Her staff knows that if they have a problem or a question they have a good place to go to get answers and backup. (Nick Oldenburg is a favorite!)