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Survey: Library needs more room

By Heather Rule
Daily Journal

The Fergus Falls Public Library is a busy place. The busiest in 2012 when compared to other non-metro Minnesota public libraries serving a similar population size, in fact.

More than 152,000 visits were made to the library in 2012, with an average of 500 visits per day and almost one new visitor each minute the library is open. There is every indication that this trend will continue, according to a report conducted the the Library Renewal task force.

In addition, the number of items checked out annually has remained steady for the past 10 years. Library program attendance has doubled since 2003.

With the library in demand, the Library Renewal Project got started in 2012. The group's goals included forming a vision of what area citizens want and need from the library, assess the future viability of the current library building, and to determine the next



Smith

steps and the costs for achieving the community's vision.

The Fergus Falls City Council and Library Board will discuss the Library Needs Assessment at a work session at 4 p.m. today in the Jean Dahling Meeting Room at the library.

It's anticipated that a recommendation for next steps for the Library Renewal Project would be presented at the Nov. 18 city council meeting.

"We're excited to be at this point," said Erin Smith, executive director of the library.

The Library Needs Assessment is a summary of needs identified

during the community engagement process. It forms a vision of what the community expects from the public library. It marks completion of phase one of the process for the Library Renewal Project.

The data includes citizen surveys, focus groups, research done by the task force and library staff interviews.

Lack of space was a top concern for nearly everyone.

"We're running into not having enough quiet spaces," Smith said. "Appropriate spaces is a big one. Having more space and the right space, too, is kind of the key."

Responses indicated the library staff is doing a good job maintaining the current facility and using the space well but also noted that expanded, separated and updated spaces would be needed to better serve the library community.

Additional space overall is necessary, according to participants. One focus group member mentioned she always feels like she is "nudging someone else out" when her family stays too long at the library.

The library is less than half the size of comparable public libraries.

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Chris Reinos/Daily Journal

Those who attend Flamingo Glass' new jewelry and magnet fusing classes will have the chance to make pieces like these. Flamingo Glass co-owner Dave Messenger said both advanced students and beginners are welcome at the classes.

Local stained glass artists take on smaller project

By Chris Reinos
Daily Journal

BUSINESS

In 2005, Sally Ott walked into a class at Flamingo Glass on making stained glass pieces as a total novice.

She never left. "Best thing I ever did," Ott said of going to that first class.

Perhaps there will be another experience similar to Ott's when Flamingo Glass hosts its first jewelry and magnet fusing classes this week.

Putting together this new class has been a long process, according to Flamingo Glass' Dave Messenger.

"This is something that we have been experimenting with and doing ourselves and finally feel comfortable offering it as a class," said Messenger, who has been working

with these smaller pieces for about a year.

The first jewelry class begins Tuesday with a two-hour session. During this first meeting, Messenger said students will have the chance to make five pieces. The following week, students will return to see the final product after Messenger and Dennis Martz fire the pieces.

The two-week class costs \$25. Another jewelry and magnet class begins Wednesday.

Students can choose between full-fused or tack-fused pieces, Messenger said. Full-fused pieces are completely smooth, while the tack-fused style, the glass sticks out of the piece. Both styles have their own benefits and both make for beautiful jewelry, Messenger said.

Flamingo Glass has been hosting stained glass classes since 2004. Those classes usually have between eight and 10 students, but Messenger said the jewelry classes should be able to accommodate more people because the pieces are smaller.

Class sizes are not the only differences between stained glass and jewelry, according to Messenger. He does not exactly know what to expect from the new class, considering he has spent less time working with jewelry.

"Doing stained glass, you know what your results are going to be," Messenger said. "Doing this, you don't have a known result yet, so it's kind of a surprise."

Ott fell in love with working with stained glass almost immediately eight years ago. Messenger said she was a natural, but Ott said even if people initially struggle in class, the relaxed atmosphere should keep them from getting frustrated.

"It's very relaxing, but if you need serious help it's there, too," she said.

Ott now attends classes three nights a week, works in the shop a few days a week and makes pieces for Flamingo Glass to sell.

Although her story may be a rare one, there is always the chance a person will walk into Tuesday's class and decide they never want to leave.

Those interested in attending Flamingo Glass' jewelry class should call the store before Tuesday evening so Messenger and Martz know how many people to expect.

Elbow Lake school yays and nays gear up for Tuesday vote

Residents to decide fate of two school buildings
By Chris Reinos
Daily Journal

As the Elbow Lake school referendum vote nears, supporters on both sides of the issue will be looking to make a final push in advance of Tuesday's vote.

The referendum will decide the future of two elementary school buildings in the West Central Area School District. The district has thrown its support behind a plan to close schools in Elbow Lake and Kensington and move all teachers and students to a building in Barrett, currently the site of the district's high school.

A "yes" vote on the first question of the referendum will support the move to one building, while a "no" vote will be to keep the Elbow Lake and Kensington schools open. The second referendum question concerns whether to continue the district's current school levy for another ten years at the price of \$1,447.78 per pupil.

Russ Rapp is a member of the "vote no" group Save Our Community Schools. He moved back to the area four years ago because he felt it was a good fit for his family.

"Part of the consideration was school life and the community," Rapp said. "In general, it's good to have kids in school near their hometown."

Rapp is also concerned about what he sees as a rushed process to get to this vote. The school board first presented facts on the situation to the public in June and came out with the referendum options in August. In October, there was a public meeting designed to answer questions districts residents had about the referendum.

"Sometimes you have to make tough decisions, but I'm not going to make that decision without knowing full-well the ramifications of that decision," Rapp said.

Superintendent Pat Westby has heard from others concern about the timeline, but he believes enough time and thought were put into the issue before setting the referendum date.

"You're always going to have people who feel it's rushed and that we need more time," Westby said. "We've heard from people that said this should have been

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OBITUARIES

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- Evelyn Gerlach, 85, Detroit Lakes
- Orris Beck, 91, Evansville
- Thomas George, 53, Battle Lake
- Lawrence Olson Sr., 86, Pelican Rapids



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