Long Range Plan

Vision Statement

Phillips Free Library exists to create an equitable world.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to empower and inspire all people to grow and connect with one another to create a better world for all.

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-2021, struggling with programming, health concerns, meeting community needs, and employee burnout, it became apparent to the staff of Phillips Free Library that we need personal and organizational revitalization. We embarked on a project of reading Simon Sinek's *Start with Why* and met regularly to discuss our purpose and passion as individuals, library employees, and promoters of the public good. It became clear, as we grappled with our confusion over the difference between what we do and how we do it, with our "why" – why does the library exist and why does that matter to us – that our belief in libraries, our vision, is in our name - Phillips ***Free*** Library.

We are part of the Free Library movement which came into being to make libraries accessible to all. We are not, as was the case in the past for many libraries, an institution that services paid members. We are not just a collection owned by and for the wealthy. We are a community organization designed to put resources into the hands of all people. This is not to say that libraries haven't failed at this mission. Certainly, during Jim Crow we know that library services were often denied to people of color. Even our own library

originally served only adults, providing services to children only starting in the 1930's. Yet, for us, the staff and trustees of Phillips Free Library, we believe the library exists to create an equitable world. This vision informs our long range plan. It grounds and undergirds our programming, outreach, services, and interactions with our community, from one-on-one daily interactions, to larger institutional and collaborative efforts with other groups, organizations, and businesses.

Phillips Free Library is chartered to serve the communities of the Homer School District. Encompassing over 160 square miles, including the towns and villages of Homer, Scott, Truxton, and Preble, the Homer School District is a large, geographically spread out community of over 12,000 people that includes individuals of all ages, genders, races, religions, members of the LGBTQ community, people of all gender identities, immigrants, and people with disabilities. This is who we serve and who we developed this long range plan for.

Methodology

Phillips Free Library Staff met over the course of months to brainstorm and develop priorities based on our new, board-approved Vision Statement for programming, outreach, and public relations plans. We further worked to get feedback from individuals living in our service area through interviews and surveys asking residents about their dreams and hopes for themselves, their families, and the larger community. Respondents reported appreciating the "small town" and "caring" feel of the community. Dreams included more opportunities for youth, maintaining and creating a sense of community, supporting local small businesses, and creating opportunities for young adults to start their own small businesses as crafts people, trades people, and entrepreneurs.

Plan

Outreach Services

As part of our mission to empower and inspire all people, connecting to people of all ages and income levels in all corners of our geographically wide-spread service area is critical. Outreach services that take the library to the

community, collaboration with other agencies, and connecting with people's needs are, therefore, a major focus of the library's plan.

Goal: The library will take services, materials, and programs into the community addressing the needs of Early literacy through Adult literacy in all communities of the Homer School District.

Objective: To increase services to the rural communities within the Homer School District including the communities of Truxton, Preble, and Scott.

Activities:

- Collaborate with Capco and the Area Agency on Aging to create joint programming that serves rural early childhood and senior population needs. Begin this exploration in 2021-2022, with development and evaluation of programs over the next 1-4 years.
- Develop over the next 1-3 years, Little Free Libraries within the Truxton, Homer, and Scott areas and service these with an ongoing collection of weeded and deleted books.
- Establish a summer traveling library easily portable in a staff vehicle or rented van for the 2021 Summer Reading program.
    - As part of this traveling library, we will create a traveling collection, separate from the current collection housed in the library building, allowing us to offer new and older selections, without taking current items out of our regular circulation.
    - Over the next 2-5 years, create a traveling library trailer with shelves, story time and activity bins, wifi, and computers to take programs and services into rural community on an every three week rotation.
- Increase staffing for these activities
- Develop ongoing evaluation of these services

Objective: To provide library services to meet the needs of those in our service area who may not see the library as beneficial to them.

Activities:

- During 2021, create a system of collecting donations and develop a Free Food Cupboard in the foyer of the library, helping those with food insecurities access free non-perishable foods and books at the library.

- Over the next 1-3 years, develop an adult literacy program that offers client-directed literacy goals in a supportive environment for adult learners.
- Collaborate with the Brewster House to develop programming and a delivery system for their residents.
- Assess need and develop afterschool programming, makerspace availability, and technology programs to meet the needs of youth who need a place to be and activities at the end of the school day.
- Increase staffing for outreach activities.
- Ongoing evaluation of outreach initiatives.

Public Relations

As part of our outreach efforts to the community, the library recognizes a growing need for an ongoing, multi-focused public relations campaign to inform the community about current and new library services and initiatives.

Goal: To increase the community's knowledge of the library's materials, services and programming.

Objective: To increase library profile through multiple formats and venues.

Activities:

- Continue library columns in the Homer News and Cortland Standard, along with occasional press releases on programming.
- Continue and further develop the newly created library e-newsletter, including targeted mailings for particular programs and specific events.
- Expanding our email list through allowing signups at the library and online.
- Expanding our social media presence with regular Facebook campaigns.
- Strengthening outreach and collaboration with the Homer Schools and Homer Recreation Department especially for yearly Summer Reading programs.
- Develop bookmarks with QR codes for advertising library program and events.
- Hold quarterly open houses/community events to promote the library as a community center.

- Increase involvement with the Homer Business Association to improve library visibility at events like Magic on Main and Holiday in Homer.
- Ongoing evaluation of PR activities.

Child and Youth Services

As part of our mission to empower and inspire all people, ongoing evaluation and improvement of current programming and development of new initiatives for youth are a major aspect of the library plan.

Goal: To provide programs to community youth that address the needs of all young people for educational, literacy, and entertainment services.

Objective: To create ongoing evaluation of current youth programming for K-12th grades, and maintain and update programs as needed.

Activities:

- Maintain the library's extensive offering of youth book clubs, including continuing to secure grant funding for the books we provide to area youth through our book clubs.
- Continue Lego club for 3rd – 5th grades.
- Redesign Rockin' Readers, our K-2nd grade weekly afterschool offering for the Fall of 2021, when it can be in-person again. New initiative to offer rotating programming that includes a traditional story/craft time, science programs, technology programs, Lego programs and taking program "on the road" to other afterschool locations like the YWCA After School Program.
- Work in partnership with the Homer Rec Department and HighKey Science to develop afterschool program that includes STEAM activities, makerspace activities, and TEchExplorers activities (which are currently funded through a donation from Nick Renzi).
- Evaluate and consider necessary redesign of programs like the Zine, our youth magazine, and library podcast to best meet our Vision and Mission statements.

Objective: To develop new programming initiatives for K-12th grade youth that reach more youth and meet the changing needs of our community's young people.

Activities:

- Develop a one-time gardening program activity for K-5th graders during the Summer of 2021, with possible development of a regular weekly activity for future summers. This is to be managed by a library staff member.
- Evaluate need and ways to develop afterschool options that offer activities and space for youth, including makerspace, STEAM, and technology offerings.
- Develop a Reading Buddies programming pairing youth who desire to improve their reading skills with an older adult. Partner with the Area Agency on Aging and the local schools for this initiative. Program will need a staff person to recruit and manage volunteers and students.

Objective: To strengthen current early literacy offerings and develop more programs for parents, toddlers, and pre-K youth.

Activities:

- Continue Toddler Story Time, expanding back to weekly and offering outdoor programming starting in the summer of 2021.
- Create a weekly parent/child meetup in the Dell starting in the Fall of 2021 or Winter of 2022, when we can once again have toys out.
- Work with Capco and other organizations, as outlined in Outreach section to develop more programming out in the community that reaches families in need of early literacy activities.
- Ongoing evaluation of community need for early literacy with further development of programs for 2022 and onward including possibly offering two Toddler Story Times a week at different times of day to reach parents who work, developing a school readiness program that complements Cortland Free Library's offerings, or a Zoom Bedtime Story Time.

Adult and Family Services

As part of the library's vision to create an equitable world, providing services to a full range of adults and families that promote diversity and understanding, increase access to education, information, and entertainment, and deepen conversation and understanding throughout the community are essential

Objective: to develop more program offerings for adults and families to reach the wider community with differing interests and needs.

Activities:

- Develop cooking classes focusing on cooking on a budget to be offered off site starting in Winter of 2022.
- Offer a Tai Chi class in the summer of 2021 and evaluate program to determine the need and interest in the development of future movement and wellness programs.
- Start a Big Idea/Ted Talk Book Discussion group in the Fall of 2021 featuring books from Ted Talk speakers or highlighted on the Big Idea Book Club https://nextbigideaclub.com/magazine/7-books-supercharge-personal-growth/26345/
- Create more one-time event offerings to both broaden library programming, reach and meet the needs of more community members, and promote the library including:
    - Quarterly open houses and family nights at the library
    - How to illustrate a picture book or graphic novel with illustrator Jake Souva
    - Personal Finance workshop in the Winter of 2022
    - Astronomy Night – Summer 2021
    - Community Conversations on important topics possibly done in conjunction with the local churches
- Explore community interest in potential programs through ongoing surveys and focus groups - ex. Crafts, genre book discussion, writing workshops, community conversations on tough topics through books, movies, and current events.
- Continue partnerships with other community groups and organizations to develop programs that meet residents' needs.

Staffing Development

The library as an agent for creating an equitable world requires that staff be both committed to that vision, agents of that vision, and encouraged and empowered in their own personal and professional growth.

Objective: To provide staff with fair compensation, opportunities for personal and professional growth, and develop an organizational structure that makes the best use of everyone's talents and insights.

Activities:

- Evaluate staffing structure and move to a more full-time, skilled staff model including combining positions and redesigning job descriptions as is possible.
- Increase compensation in keeping with providing a living wage and encouraging staff to develop wider and deeper skill sets and competencies.
- Increase budget for employee training and staff development
- Develop multiple forms of employee appreciation to let staff know they are valued.

Facilities

Phillips Free Library serves as a community center promoting, a vital part of our historic downtown, and an architectural centerpiece to the village. As such our building is an important vehicle for creating an equitable world.

Objective: Maintain and expand the use and benefit of the library building to the community.

Activities:

- Budget appropriately for ongoing maintenance and updates to the building.
- Evaluate evolving demands of the community and the library on an annual basis and plan remodeling projects when needed to repurpose library space for changing.
- Evaluate library attic for potential future development.

Approved by Phillips Free Library Board of Trustees 6/21/21