

LME Library awarded \$125,000 for building project

The Lillie M. Evans Library was awarded a 2016 Live & Learn grant for a library expansion project in the amount of \$125,000. "With the state of Illinois' finances, we decided to proceed with a library expansion project. The money is available now and we were afraid that delaying our plans would result in no state funding for library capital projects in the future," stated Library Director, Beth Duttlinger. The expansion project will be financed with grants, TIF funds, charitable gifts, and financing. There are no plans to request a referendum. Please contact the library for information on donating to the project.

The current library building was constructed in 1956 with a floor plan of 66 feet by 60 feet. In 2001, the library was remodeled and a 4,000-foot addition was completed--increasing the library to 7,480 square feet. Although the 2001 expansion more than doubled the capacity of the previous building, more space is needed. As early as 2003, a SWOT analysis conducted by the Princeville Civic Association indicated there were concerns that "inadequate library/multimedia facilities" continued to be a weakness in the educational resources of our community.

In 2010, responses from the Library's Long Range Planning focus group indicated that there was an overwhelming need from community members for additional expansion of the library. Our biggest weaknesses include: an insufficient children's service area, a meeting room too small for library programming and community group use, no public access to the library's collection of historical materials, and inadequate restrooms.

Accommodating community needs has been a driving force for this project. A new addition will address some of the needs that have arisen in the last decade by focusing on the children's programming and community programming needs.

At first, the board and staff worked to address issues by redefining and repurposing spaces. From 2011-2013, spaces were rearranged, shelving was added, the interior was repainted and the flooring was replaced. However, there was no way to address the lack of meeting rooms and the inadequate children's area. It was only after these efforts did it become apparent that the library needed more space, and an additional expansion project was necessary.

In 2014, the board hired building consultant, Fred Schlipf, to assist with the creation of a building program. This allowed the board and staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the library building and prioritize the additional community needs for the building. We had numerous meetings with staff and board members and conducted a focus group and community survey. Throughout the entire process, the board, staff, and community expressed their appreciation of the flexibility and beauty of the existing library space so the expansion has been designed around the existing building. Service areas will move but little remodeling or construction will take place on the existing library.

After the building program was complete, the board published a request for qualifications in spring 2015, and several architectural firms submitted packets. The field was narrowed to three finalists and the architectural firm of Wright and Associates was chosen. One of the key elements in selecting this firm was the opportunity to work with lead architect, Donald Westlake again. Donald was the architect for the 2001 expansion project.

Once the architectural firm was hired, we turned our attention to the Harv Stahl property purchased by the library in 2008. Unfortunately, the building was in such disrepair and the design was not in harmony with the library's structure so it could not be used for the library expansion. The architects assisted the board with the demolition process and the building was removed in August 2015. The site was compacted and prepared for future construction. Once the building was demolished, the site was surveyed and a soil survey was completed.

In fall of 2015, Wright and Associates worked with the building program, the staff, and board to develop schemes for the library expansion. After many revisions, we produced a floor plan that met the majority of our community defined needs. Once we had a floor plan, we worked with the architects to develop a furniture plan. We are reusing all the existing shelving and seating and we wanted to make sure it fit and functioned in the defined spaces. The outdoor elevations have been designed to match the existing structure and the architects are working diligently to find a brick match. The construction documents phase began in late 2015, and the architects have completed the preliminary drawings

The addition can be constructed with little impact on library operations. The library can fully function and we'd like to organize the transition in the same way we did the 2013 flooring project. The library staff planned the implementation in phases and we were able to stay open throughout the entire process.

The Lillie M. Evans Library District is an attractive, well-designed library that has been successful in masking our inadequacies for years. However, these inadequacies and limitations have become a detriment in fulfilling our mission. We are in small community in a rural area with few businesses and services. The community depends on us to provide "materials and services to help residents meet their personal, education, cultural, and professional needs" and to support "an environment for life-long learning" (LME Library Mission). This addition will allow the Lillie M. Evans Library's facilities to better serve the community today and for decades to come.