

Hamilton Township Free Public Library

2021 Annual Report to

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Scott A. Chianese

LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Introduction: It is with pleasure that I present to you the 2021 Hamilton Township Library Annual Report. As mandated by the Library Board of Trustees, this report not only summarizes our service levels for 2021, but comments on the overall health of the library within the context of our updated Strategic Plan, revised by the Director and Library Board to incorporate our new vision and goals for the future.

General Condition: The year 2021 continued to change almost every aspect of life in our community, presenting unforeseen challenges due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The library addressed this reality by pursuing innovations in the services and resources we provide to our community, as our doors necessarily remained closed throughout the first half of the year. Once we were able to reopen fully in June, our direction changed to facilitating in-person interaction in the safest way possible, while maintaining the level of service expected by our patrons.

Beyond the needs of our residents, the library's primary concern remains the financial stability of our institution. Funding remains unpredictable, as our budget is determined by a tax-based formula, regardless of economic conditions and the continued demand for a wide array of non-traditional services. Essential financial support from our Friends organization was diminished due to continued pandemic restrictions early in the year. However, with the support of our Mayor and Township, the library was able to take advantage of funding offered through the American Rescue Plan to finance initiatives that would otherwise have been impossible. We hopefully anticipate further consideration through this program in 2022 so that we may move forward with additional repairs and improvements.

The library understands its role as a vital resource for our residents, and we are committed to providing the best possible service to our community, because it deserves nothing less. The library continues to make the best and most responsible use of the funding provided by taxpayer monies to serve the wishes and needs of Hamiltonians, with dedication to our vision and mission as our guide.

The reader may notice that comments do not exist in areas for which noteworthy progress was not made in 2021; the limiting factors generally being financial, resource, and time constraints. This does not indicate that the stated goals do not remain vital to the future success of the library.

Strategic Initiative #1: Service Excellence

Hamilton Free Public Library exists to meet the needs of the community.

Goal: Offer customer-focused service throughout the organization.

Objectives:

- ***Evaluate workflow, staffing levels and budget allocation to maximize customer satisfaction with resources and services.*** The library maintains the minimal number of quality employees necessary to continue to provide the highest level of service. While the library remained closed to the public due to the pandemic, staff provided assistance from home via telephone and internet due to increased patron demand in those areas. A supervisory position vacated due to retirement was filled from within, with other long tenured employees promoted to fill the positions created as a result. A part-time employee that did not return after our reopening was replaced by a candidate with exceptional customer service experience, extremely accommodating schedule flexibility, and a genuine desire to work in a library atmosphere.

- ***Provide clear and accessible communication with Library visitors and patrons, both physically and digitally.*** Signs are posted at all entryways, on our lobby billboards, and electronically to our front desk digital sign, promoting upcoming events and resources. Regular updates to our Facebook page and website inform visitors to those outlets, and email announcements sent by the Township provide messages from the library on a regular basis. Upgrades to our website allow us to present a more organized, logical display to accommodate ease of use. In addition, the new format allows for quicker and easier updates, which are now performed by library staff (work that was previously contracted). Increases in web use and individual page views have been measured since the changes were made. Bylaws recently updated by our Board of Trustees were added to our website for ease of access by our community.

Goal: Strive to provide service excellence, keeping up with current trends, and evolving community needs.

Objectives:

- ***Incorporate continuous improvement and ongoing evaluation into all Library operations and services.*** With invaluable Township assistance, we were able to procure grant money to improve our WIFI service and strength, an issue which caused concern when it was in use by multiple patrons simultaneously. These funds were also used to replace public printers and scanners with more efficient and powerful models designed to handle large workloads, thus reducing downtime caused by breakdowns due to excessive use. Previously mentioned upgrades to our website have made navigation clearer, allowing patrons quick and easy access to the wide variety of new resources (such as electric content provided by Hoopla and Axis360), and virtual interactive programs including our collaborative efforts with Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Although unable to offer in-person tax assistance due to the pandemic, curbside delivery of forms, instructions and other tax related materials was provided.

- ***Gather, evaluate and implement best practices from other libraries, and adapt them to our operation, as appropriate.*** Using funds provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES), the library purchased a thermal camera to allow staff to read patron temperatures from a safe distance during the height of the pandemic. Additionally, a portable

panic alarm system was put in place that allows a device to be worn or carried that will contact emergency services at the press of a button from anywhere within the building. This system was entirely funded by the Friends of the Library at no taxpayer expense. Staff continue to attend meetings and professional/paraprofessional training off site when possible, or virtually as necessity dictates.

- ***Evaluate Library policies and procedures against current trends and evolving community needs to improve the experience of all Library users.*** With the revision of the Library Bylaws completed this year, the Director and staff intend to proceed with updating library policy and procedures in 2022.

- ***Create innovative services and programs and share with other libraries and our community.*** Continuing our efforts to provide stimulating virtual programming and remote offerings, we subscribed to the Hoopla online service which delivers digital access to movies, television series, music, audiobooks, eBooks, and graphic novels directly to a patron's electric device. The library is also providing access to "Brainfuse", an on-demand, eLearning resource for all ages and skill levels. This service allows tutors and patrons to communicate in live, one-on-one sessions, provides skill building activities, GED test prep, resume assistance and much more. We collaborated with Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital to offer a weekly "Hope and Healing" program to support those dealing with isolation issues during the pandemic. Other programming continues to be offered either virtually or outdoors (to accommodate safe social distancing), with creative and interactive events including music programs by Tim Hoh, Jim Gaven, the Key of Awesome and the Music Roundtable, nature stories about the Abbott Marshlands, and an opportunity for patrons to paint alongside local artist Kenneth Lewis. We offered a wide variety of story times and their corresponding crafts for our youngest cardholders during every season of the year. All of these programs were provided without expense to taxpayers through a combination of CARES funding, volunteer assistance or sponsorship by our Friends of the Library organization.

Strategic Initiative #2: Access to Information

The free exchange of ideas and access to information are fundamental tenets of a democratic society.

Goal: Make the Library easier to use for everyone.

Objectives:

- ***Evaluate policy, economic, language, cultural, and physical barriers to reduce or eliminate barriers to access.*** Unlimited access for every patron is an important tenet of library thought, and we continue to evaluate our ability to offer services without limitation. Contactless curbside delivery of materials provided access to our resources for those unable or unwilling to enter the building for fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus, or for any other reason. Improvement to our WIFI signal enabled users access from inside as well as outside the library, so that those that may have difficulty or would prefer to work from our surrounding environs may do so. We continue to expand our physical collection of materials in languages other than English, and plan a complete review and update of our Library Policies in 2022.

- ***Explore techniques to better market and promote the collection.*** The library continues to utilize our electronic resources fully, including our Facebook page and newly upgraded website. We take advantage of a strong working relationship with the Township to help promote materials, services and events utilizing daily emails to our residents. The library sent out an “Open Call for Sculptors” through a variety of fine arts media resources to attract local artisans and their supporters to our building. This in turn led to a donation by one local artist of nine oil-on-canvas creations for permanent display in our collection.

- ***Reach out to special client groups such as youth, teens, seniors, persons with disabilities, English language learners, underserved communities, etc., to meet their needs.*** An event hosted by Grice Middle School to provide, “support to ensure the academic success of their students during this difficult time”, was attended by library staff to share information about our offerings with students and community members. The Library also had several representatives in attendance at the Township’s annual “Oktoberfest” celebration, to connect and interact with visitors, share information and assist with library card registrations. The library has teamed with local high school students to provide a virtual “Introduction to Robotics” program intended for elementary and middle school aged students. The previously mentioned “Brainfuse” program is intended for students seeking online tutoring and test preparation assistance, as well as adults in need of skill building and resume help for career advancement, while the “Hope and Healing” program offered in collaboration with Robert Wood Johnson Hospital is intended for seniors in the community. The library worked with the Township Health Department to host both flu and COVID vaccine clinics, and we continue to provide a welcome destination to a wide variety of organizations that cater to people with disabilities. These groups use the library on a regular basis, taking advantage of our multitude of resources, services and programs.

Goal: Increase staff and public awareness of what we do and what we have.

Objectives:

- ***Raise public awareness by promoting services, materials, and programs.*** The aforementioned library representation at Grice Middle School’s “Back to School Bash” and Hamilton Township’s “Oktoberfest” serve as primary examples of raising public awareness of our many offerings. In addition, we utilize our upgraded website, which contains slideshows that present images of upcoming events and programs on a rotating basis to provide more information in a cleaner and more concise fashion. Our close relationship with the Township continues to expand our ability to promote programs and services on social media and through email, and more advanced planning allows for inclusion in the township’s annual printed calendar. We work closely with the “For the Love of Reading” book club and our Friends of the Library to promote events by word of mouth and through their social media sites, and of course utilize the library Facebook page as well. The library is currently working with a local business to share promotional materials at their site, while we in turn provide books to encourage reading in the community through a “Take a Book, Leave a Book” program. There are plans concerning a jointly run book fair to raise funds for the library in the near future.

- ***Ensure that all staff are fully conversant with Hamilton Free Public Library’s collections, resources, policies, and procedures.***

● ***Share the Library's core values with staff and community.*** The library's core values are articulated in our recently revised Strategic Plan, establishing goals with the future success of the library and exemplary service for our patrons in mind. We collaborated with business representatives from Amazon to provide residents with opportunities for employment. The library worked closely with resident members of the armed forces to aid thousands of Afghan refugees housed at McGuire Air Force Base, providing donated reading materials to help them better learn the English language, acquire citizenship, and prosper in trades and education. The library continues to conduct food and clothing drives, including a drop box for the Rescue Mission of Trenton, our "Warm Feet, Warm Hearts" clothing drive, Cellphones for Soldiers and our food drive for local pantries and needy individuals, demonstrating our commitment to public service and belief in giving back to the community in which we reside.

● ***Improve and increase outreach efforts.*** Despite staff limitations and continued restrictions due to the pandemic, the Library managed many off site visits to local establishments. Some highlights included a visit to Lalor Elementary, where backpacks were offered to students signing up for library cards, and our continued participation in the National Night Out and Oktoberfest, where information regarding our collection, services and events are shared with the community. We joined our Hamilton Township Health Department and a local business to provide flu shots and COVID vaccine clinics at our location, developing an association that will allow for further collaborative efforts.

Goal: Create ways to reach patrons who cannot or do not visit the Library.

Objectives:

● ***Continually assess the needs of our Hamilton resident population, including non-drivers and homebound residents.***

● ***Create partnerships with government entities and nonprofit organizations to provide access to Library collections and services.*** Our working relationship with the New Jersey State Library has enabled us to offer the "Brainfuse" on-demand, eLearning resource, providing patrons of all ages and levels access to tutors, skill building activities and test preparation. We have teamed with local high school students to present a virtual "Introduction to Robotics" program for children, and have collaborated with a Hamilton resident to provide virtual weekly music programs and discussions utilizing our website. Both events have the potential to become in-person occurrences when our meeting spaces reopen. The library worked closely with the Robert Wood Johnson Institute for Prevention and Recovery to provide weeks of virtual interactive programming, while the School Superintendents' Representative to our Library Board continues to nurture the relationship between the library and our local schools, allowing for a closer partnership and improved sharing of resources throughout the township. We work closely with many departments within the Township as well. With the help of the Clerk's Office we provide a safe location for voters in primary and general elections. We host the Police Department's Safety Town program each summer, as well as tours and programs they run throughout the school year, in addition to our collaboration with the Township Health Department to provide flu and COVID vaccine clinics mentioned earlier in this report. This year we have added the Hamilton Animal Shelter to that list, creating a display in our lobby that provides images and details about pets currently available for adoption.

Strategic Initiative #3: Learning Organization

We believe that we provide the best possible Library services when we are engaged in professional development.

Goal: Be a responsive, evolving organization.

Objectives:

- ***Recognize exceptional individual and group performance, innovation, collaboration, creative problem-solving, and continuous learning.*** Staff are commended for their accomplishments by supervisors and the Director, who bring extraordinary efforts to the attention of the Library Board of Trustees for acknowledgement. In 2021, we were dealt a great loss by the retirement of our Circulation Department Supervisor after 38 years of service. However, this departure opened up opportunities for advancement, allowing for the promotion of employees that have vast experience in the field, and have demonstrated initiative and leadership potential over many years of service. These promotions from within were well deserved, and will also serve to improve morale and a dedication to service.
- ***Create the optimal workforce for the Library's future; identify appropriate workload staffing levels necessary for running operations; strive to attract and retain a staff that reflects the diversity of our community.*** The retirement of a long tenured employee allowed for promotions, which in turn left a lower-level position vacant. This title has remained unfilled to determine if it is essential to maintain optimum operating levels. A part-time candidate with years of customer service experience, greater scheduling flexibility, and a genuine interest in library work replaced an employee that departed earlier this year. This addition has had an obvious positive effect on our ability to better serve the public.
- ***Share knowledge throughout the organization, and encourage staff to avail themselves of both onsite and offsite professional development opportunities.*** All library staff are required to annually participate in professional development activities, while the Director and department supervisors wholeheartedly encourage staff ingenuity. This continues to be accomplished primarily through virtual means, as staff regularly attend webinars seeking new and better ways to effectively complete their work and serve our community. Any and all relevant knowledge regarding changes in the library field are shared throughout the organization.
- ***Actively practice open, honest communication.*** Staff felt confident in expressing their concerns regarding personal safety, which were brought to the attention of the Director. Following thorough investigation and testing, a portable panic alarm system was installed that will allow a device worn by employees to contact police through emergency 911 at the press of a button. This system is effective throughout the entire building, and was installed without the use of taxpayer money in thanks to funding from our Friend's organization.
- ***To the extent that it is fiscally possible, financially support professional development of staff.***

Strategic Initiative #4: Lifelong Learning and Enjoyment

Hamilton has a proud heritage of diversity and inclusion, and is strongly committed to education and learning.

Goal: Promote literacy and the love of reading and learning for all ages.

Objectives:

● ***Develop opportunities for staff and the public to cultivate and share their love of reading.***

Participation in outreach to local schools and township events allow us to promote literacy to community members outside of the library. The previously mentioned “Take a Book, Leave a Book” program enables us to reach Hamiltonians at a remote location that we otherwise may not have been able to connect with, sharing our vision and services through library promotional materials and providing various levels of material to encourage reading to all ages. This working relationship benefits the entire community, and we look forward to closer collaboration in the future. Our “For the Love of Reading” book club continues to offer their meetings virtually when necessary due to the pandemic, but also held in-person gatherings out of doors when the weather improved to once again allow personal interaction between members.

● ***Develop programs in support of, and in coordination with, the collection.*** Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic in-person programming remained at a minimum, however our virtual presence continued to expand. We were able to offer some programming outdoors covering a broad range of topics, with registration requirements in place to limit attendance. These included various musical and art performances, nature and history presentations, and a wide variety of entertainment relating to seasonal and holiday events. Many of these programs were accompanied by activity bag giveaways that consisted of crafts, school supplies, and other fun and educational materials, including suggested readings to better incorporate utilization of our collection. Our Third Annual Scarecrow Contest and display attracted several participants and dozens of spectators, including many that had never come to the library before. Seasonal programming was provided in conjunction with this month long event. Our ever growing virtual offerings included the addition of the Hoopla digital music and video service, which was heavily promoted as a tie in to our summer reading and seasonal programs. We also offered the Music Roundtable program as a link to our expansive digital, compact disc and sheet music collection.

Goal: Build, manage and evaluate our collection in order to meet the educational, recreational, and cultural needs of the community.

Objectives:

● ***Evaluate community and patron desires and make sure they are reflected in our collection.***

Library front line staff’s interaction with the people of our community, both on-site and remotely via outreach, constantly influence our material choices for inclusion in the collection. As an example, overwhelming patron demand for a wider variety of electronic offerings led to our inclusion of the Hoopla and Axis360 platforms. Our efforts to determine the substance of our collection continue to evolve so that we may meet the needs of our ever changing demographic.

- ***Define the role of the collection and the appropriate balance for types of materials, including formats, age levels and subjects.*** The professional staff review our collection on an ongoing basis, replacing out of date resources with more current and vital material in a variety of formats. We continue to expand our virtual presence, seeking out a diverse array of media. This year, for example, a local artist gifted an assortment of oil on canvas works to the library, which are now a permanent part of the collection.

- ***Provide easy, user-focused access to the collection.***

Goal: Use technology to provide innovative Library services and to reach out to remote users.

Objectives:

- ***Evaluate our integrated library system to ensure optimum customer service and financial stewardship.*** We continued to improve system-wide service by installing additional WIFI access points throughout the library. These provide a stronger signal and better reception to a larger number of users both inside the building and to those in our immediate surroundings. The library relies on staff with vast technological experience to complete necessary, invaluable routine upgrades and system maintenance, ensuring performance at an optimal level. We practice due diligence with regard to contracted technical support, requesting proposals on a regular basis to guarantee we receive the best return on our investment.

- ***Use the interactive potential of the catalog and website to get feedback from our users.***

Upgrades to our website have increased visitation and ease of use by our patrons, and provide us with the ability to monitor and measure page views. This helps to determine what features are working most efficiently, what offerings are more popular and most utilized, and aids us in creating further modifications to improve the site. These upgrades effect not only library offered resources and events, but also those provided in collaboration with partners such as the Music Roundtable and “Hope and Healing” virtual programs. Contact information for our Board of Trustees President was added to our main page, joining the currently listed email and phone numbers of staff organized by department. Reference and Circulation personnel receive patron requests and suggestions through our catalog, rarely taking more than 24 hours to reply.

Strategic Initiative #5: Cultural Center

Hamilton is a dynamic hub of cultural activities and civic engagement.

Goal: Offer programming which serves the needs and interests of the Hamilton community.

Objectives:

- ***Improve Library-wide coordination, planning, and evaluation of programming.*** Although Board of Trustee restrictions due to the pandemic necessarily prohibited the use of our indoor meeting space, and capacity limitations were in place for gatherings that were held, the library continued to present programming both virtual and out of doors throughout the year. Staff and contracted performers coordinated to make these events safe and successful for all those involved. Inter-departmental cooperation insured that interactive concerts, art workshops, and baby and toddler times with accompanying themed craft and activity bag giveaways were

accomplished without difficulty. Any programs presented by non-library staff are rebooked as a consequence of repeated successful events, and new presenters are researched and (if possible) previewed before scheduling. The Director or the coordinating department supervisor are always in attendance on the day of a performance to insure a program's quality.

- ***Work in collaboration with other organizations (libraries, schools, businesses) and cultural institutions to develop, co-sponsor and publicize programs.*** The library endeavors to connect with more and different organizations each year to provide entertaining and educational programming to our community. In 2021, we worked closely with the New Jersey State Library to offer the "Brainfuse" eLearning resource, with each institution publicizing and promoting the program at their respective locations. The library presented weekly virtual music programs hosted by a Hamilton resident, and collaborated with Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital to present an online health initiative weekly as well. We conducted an open call for sculptors, seeking local artisans to add their works to our outdoor sculpture park. Local artists continue to be solicited to display their paintings, sculpture, photos and much more, beautifying the library building and grounds, and demonstrating the importance of the library as a cultural destination. Additionally, we worked with a local business to jointly host a COVID vaccine clinic at the library, leading to our participation in the aforementioned "Take a Book, Leave a Book" program promoting reading in the community. We lent support to local high school students presenting a virtual introduction to robotics program for children via our website, and our Children's Department continues to work closely with the Hamilton Township Police and local schools throughout the year to offer "Safety Town" programming.

Goal: Optimize the use of meeting rooms.

Objectives:

- ***Maintain a centralized listing where all events and programs held in the Library can be posted.*** The library home page is updated frequently to insure that all the most current happenings are prominently displayed. Recent upgrades to our website provide clear and direct access to our calendar, which lists all events, meetings and programs. Our Children's department creates monthly schedules for distribution, and our lobby bulletin boards and digital sign are used exclusively to post upcoming library events. All of this information is available electronically via our Facebook page, and is also distributed to subscribers township-wide via weekly emails.

- ***Communicate to the community the availability of and limitations on the use of meeting rooms.*** Meeting room information is readily available via a link on our website that leads patrons directly to the section of our library policies explaining their use and restrictions. Room request forms can be accessed and completed digitally, or delivered in person to the library. Public meeting room use continued to be prohibited this year due to the ongoing pandemic, with only library fundraising events and board of trustee meetings allowed. A letter from our Board President is posted to our website on a monthly basis, updating patrons as to the changing status of our rooms. We maintain communication with interested parties in preparation for use in 2022, and continue to serve as the emergency evacuation location for Grice Middle School.

Strategic Initiative #6: Stewardship

The township of Hamilton, its residents and businesses provide us with the funds to operate the Library and expect us to maintain the highest levels of efficiency and integrity.

Goal: Develop a comprehensive plan to maintain and upgrade Library infrastructure (building, grounds, technology) to ensure safety, efficiency and the delivery of excellent Library service. Balance opportunities for improvement against costs.

Objectives:

- ***Determine and plan for upkeep-, upgrade- and replacement-costs for all systems on a continuing basis.*** In early 2021, the library obtained a one-year renewal of our managed services agreement with our technical support company. This Hamilton based company continues to provide exemplary service without an increase in cost, and additionally installed much needed WIFI equipment using grant money acquired through the American Rescue Plan, incurring no taxpayer expense. The library also utilized these funds to replace our public printer and combination fax/scanner with more powerful and efficient models meant to handle large workloads. These new machines, purchased from a local vendor, reduced the breakdown frequency we experienced with the less durable machines previously in use. Following the recommendation of fellow township departments, the library replaced our pest control provider with a more reliable service, realizing a reduction in cost in the process. We continue our vigilance in regard to the risk of legionella within the cooling system, following a rigid water management program implemented to prevent the potential for reoccurrence. Next year, we will return to the bidding process for both HVAC and technical support services, guaranteeing our community they receive the best service for the expense.

- ***Explore with the Township of Hamilton, opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of the Library.*** The Library diminishes our carbon footprint by engaging local companies to perform work onsite and deliver supplies. Township personnel restored our parking lot islands, which had been overgrown with weeds and contained old and dying trees. They now consist of healthy native species in beds of mulch, which require less upkeep and water. We were one of the first libraries to enroll in a new program offered by our book provider in which damaged and out of date materials being removed from the collection are returned to be resold or recycled rather than discarded.

Goal: Make the best use of available space.

Objective:

- ***Regularly evaluate the use of Library spaces, making changes as needed, within fiscal limitations.*** The library offered curbside delivery of materials from our collection, federal and state tax forms, and various other patron requests, providing our community with valuable resources while our facility was closed due to government restrictions as a result of the ongoing pandemic. After reopening, we continued to offer this service as an option upon request. The library served as a polling location during both the primary and regular elections, with protocols put in place to guarantee a safe experience for voters and election officials. As rooms were unavailable for programming, we instead took advantage of our vast outdoor areas to host events and activities. With the assistance of one of our resident artists, we placed an “open call for sculptures” in local media seeking works to add to our sculpture park, a cultural destination for ten years. In addition, one local artist gifted a collection of his oil on canvas works for

permanent display, which have been placed in our downstairs gallery to be enjoyed by the entire community.

Goal: Align our budget with institutional goals and priorities, and ensure our budget process is open and transparent.

Objectives:

- ***Develop a budget process that actively encourages staff and public input.*** Library staff do their utmost to save taxpayer money, from conserving supplies and electricity, to coming up with individual cost saving efforts of their own. Staff are encouraged to present suggestions regarding the use of library funds, and all practical proposals are considered during budget deliberations.
- ***Raise our cost consciousness and encourage staff participation in cost containment efforts.*** Fiscal responsibility is one of our top priorities, with the ultimate goal of saving taxpayer dollars. Contracts with local companies that have a proven record are always preferred, but only when savings can be realized. For that reason, we purchased a printer and combination fax/scanner obtained with grant funding from a local company. These machines will go under a currently utilized service contract so that supplies and repairs will be included, effectively leaving us with zero cost for the purchase of these items. Previously mentioned upgrades to our website were performed by a member of the library staff, allowing for savings by eliminating reliance on a contracted web designer. In addition, the library is now participating in the “Sustainable Shelves” program offered by our materials provider. Books that we are removing from the collection due to damage or obsolescence can now be returned to the company for resale or recycling. In return, the library account will be credited for use towards future purchases, yet another avenue of savings.
- ***Demonstrate operating efficiencies to the community.*** The library awarded a one-year contract extension to our IT support company for continued service without an increase in their fee, a bid \$11,000 lower than the next candidate. The library upgraded our WIFI service and added new machinery for public use without incurring any expense by utilizing grant funding through the American Rescue Plan. We plan to apply for aid again in 2022 to improve building ventilation and complete projects left unfinished because of revenue decreases due to the pandemic. Several changes amongst the staff occurred due to a retirement as we filled positions by promoting from within. This will lead to savings realized for several years, as these moves placed employees at the entry level salaries for those titles. Further savings were appreciated by changing a full-time position to part-time, altering the dynamics of the work so that service levels do not decrease. In addition, one other position will remain unfilled until need dictates otherwise. The replacement of our contracted pest control service by a less expensive competitor led to savings that were compounded by taking advantage of a discount offered for paying annually rather than monthly. Many of the online resources we offer are provided gratis by various institutions, while others were paid for using grant funding. The Library continues to work closely with our Friend’s organization and alongside our contracted internet technology provider to replace public computers on a rotating basis at no cost to taxpayers. We take full advantage of our generous community by using donated materials to replace damaged items and add others that we do not currently own.

Goal: Broaden our resources.

Objectives:

- ***Maintain a centrally coordinated volunteer program that includes training and recognition of volunteers.***

- ***Explore ways to increase resources through community and Library partnerships, fundraising and grants.*** The financial support we receive from our Friends organization is essential, enabling us to provide goods and services at no cost to the library or our public, including a wide variety of programming. We collaborated with the Robert Wood Johnson Institute for Prevention and Recovery, a local high school robotics club, and several area artists and musicians to offer new educational and entertainment options to our patrons. The library continues to expand our affiliation with these artists, displaying their works both inside the building and on the surrounding grounds. Regular visits to our local schools convey information about our services, and provide on-site library card registration to those that may not have access to transportation. The Director remains in close contact with sources at the New Jersey Department of Labor to provide employment information, and our work with the STEMnauts volunteer tutoring program is ongoing, connecting students with tutors for virtual assistance. We hope to return to in-person instruction as soon as possible. As has been previously mentioned, funds from the American Rescue Plan were used to provide much-needed technological upgrades for our patrons.

*** *End* ***