

# **Hamilton Township Free Public Library**

## **2022 Annual Report to**

**Mr. Jeffrey Martin, Mayor**

### **TOWNSHIP COUNCIL**

Charles F. Whalen, President

Anthony Carabelli, Jr., Vice President

Pasquale Papero, Jr.,

Nancy Phillips

Richard Tighe

### **LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Leonard Santamaria, President

Toni DeAngelo, Vice President

Renee Rogers, Secretary/School Supt.'s Designee

Joy Kerlin, Mayor's Designee

Robert B. Atkin

Iris W. Tonti

Anthony J. "Skip" Cimino

**Respectfully Submitted**

Scott A. Chianese

LIBRARY DIRECTOR

**Introduction:** It is with pleasure that I present to you the 2022 Hamilton Township Library Annual Report. As mandated by the Library Board of Trustees, this report not only summarizes our service levels for 2022, but comments on the overall health of the library within the context of our Strategic Plan.

**General Condition:** After two long years, 2022 brought with it some relief, as the library was able to return all of our provided services back to their pre-COVID levels. Our doors were once again open on our regular schedule, without restrictions on attendance due to room capacity limits.

Serving the people of Hamilton is of course our primary goal, but financial stability is always a concern. Funding based on tax revenue remains unpredictable, while demand for services of a continually expanding variety increases. Our limited reserve capital was able to address only necessary repairs in a nearly fifty-year-old building experiencing the negative aspects of aging. We continue to rely on financial support from our Friends organization to provide programs, services and more expensive items that require replacement.

As will be observed in the following report, the library continues to make the best use of available funding, and remains committed to the responsible expense of taxpayer monies. We were unsuccessful in our quest for grant monies in 2022, despite multiple submissions in a variety of categories, while we await a decision on other pending applications. This will not lessen our determination in the coming year, as we will continue our search for funding, one of our primary goals being the renovation and ADA compliance of our restroom facilities.

The reader may notice that comments do not exist in areas for which noteworthy progress was not made in 2022; 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. Temporary staff are brought in when needed, and only for short-term assistance during our busiest times of the year, the summer and during the winter holidays. Promotion occurs primarily when positions are vacated due to retirement, and when the next senior member of the staff is considered qualified to hold that title. Promoting from within helps us to retain qualified, dedicated staff and maintain service levels by filling roles with current personnel, many with over 10 years' experience. In addition, savings are realized as staff at the highest range of their salary depart to be replaced by co-workers receiving entry level pay in that title, which occurred in several departments this year. The new position of Assistant Township Historian was created out of necessity, to allow for training in this field of work as the expected retirement of our long-serving Township Historian is eminent.

- ***Provide clear and accessible communication with Library visitors and patrons, both physically and digitally.*** Our digital sign in the main lobby is active during all hours of service, to keep patrons informed of library events, programs, and other important information. Hard copies of these happenings and resources are posted at all entryways and on our lobby billboards. Our Facebook page and website receive updates nearly every day, and the township includes important library activities in their subscription email correspondence. Policies updated by our Board of Trustees this year were added to our website for ease of access by the community. We are also exploring the potential of providing a digital newsletter to our patrons beginning in 2023.

**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.*** Our recently appointed Assistant Township Historian, with the help of a volunteer aide, has made great strides in weeding and reorganizing the local history collection to allow for ease of use. Items that are not relevant have been rehomed to organizations in the surrounding area, creating connections with individuals that can provide the same courtesy to us in the future. Yearbooks from local area schools have been restored to their respective institutions to help fill out their collections.

- ***Gather, evaluate and implement best practices from other libraries, and adapt them to our operation, as appropriate.*** The Library Board of Trustees made the decision for us to join libraries nationwide by eliminating fines for overdue materials. The belief is that the transition to a fine-free system will facilitate borrowing and remove obstacles that may prohibit community

members from accessing our materials and services. This initiative will continue for a period of one year, at which time the Board will meet to determine the future of this policy. Although we are going fine-free, we expect our patrons to return items in a timely manner so that others in the community can enjoy them. Borrowers will still be charged for damaged items, and for items considered lost (not returned several weeks after their due date). Adopting this policy has allowed us to terminate our relationship with the Unique Management collection agency, realizing savings by eliminating their monthly fee.

- ***Evaluate Library policies and procedures against current trends and evolving community needs to improve the experience of all Library users.*** The Library Board of Trustees, with guidance from the Director, completed a thorough review and revision of our Library Policies, which had not been accomplished since 2011. Going forward, this process will take place at least once every five years.

- ***Create innovative services and programs and share with other libraries and our community.*** The library continues to collect food items for the needy through our ongoing “People Helping People” campaign. Donated goods are distributed to charitable organizations, or directly to some of the township’s neediest residents. We are always seeking to diversify the programming available to our patrons, and provide a wide variety of ever changing performers to complement the more popular acts that are invited back. The year 2022 was no different, as the quality of our adult programming continued to escalate with an Antique’s Roadshow style item valuation event hosted by Lambertville antiques dealer and appraiser Mike Ivankovic, and an Estate Planning Seminar presented by retired Assistant Prosecutor and Municipal Court Judge Paul Daniele. We welcomed back the Olde Town Carolers for an outdoor holiday musical presentation including warm beverages, treats, and even a snow machine. Master Storyteller Jonathan Kruk returned after a 3-year hiatus to regale us with his rendition of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, a program featured nationwide on major television networks and sold out every October at the Old Dutch Church in the Historic Hudson Valley. This year we were also able to bring back several of our more popular programs that had been discontinued during the pandemic. The Museum Pass Program began just in time for summer, offering free passes to eight cultural and historical establishments (we plan to add more institutions next year). We also reintroduced our Movie of the Week program, with three showings a week of a wide assortment of popular films. These adult programs complement our ever-popular children’s offerings, which have been a mainstay for our younger patrons and their families. Some of the events included in this year’s schedule included musical programs by Jim Gaven and Tim Hoh, Mad Science’s Fire and Ice show, and Paper Heart Puppet’s Cardboard Explosion. This year, we introduced the Unique Creatures Animal display and Mad Science Halloween Show to coincide with our Third Annual Scarecrow Contest and create a fall festival atmosphere. These and other programs throughout the year are complemented by an array of seasonal and holiday themed crafts, activities, and story times presented on a regular basis. All programs and presentations continue to be offered free of

charge to our community in thanks to funding generously provided 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 all is an important tenet of library thought, and we are always looking for ways to improve in this area. The fine-free initiative was adopted with that enthusiastically in mind, removing barriers that may inhibit economically challenged members of the community from utilizing our services. The revision of our policies was embraced with a keen eye towards addressing guidelines that could be considered prejudicial or discriminatory in any way. Next year, our sites are set on confronting the lack of compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act in regards to the restrooms throughout the building.

- ***Explore techniques to better market and promote the collection.*** Our search for an ever-expanding retinue of outlets to help promote the library is constant. The Director appeared on "This Month in Hamilton", a monthly program hosted by the Mayor that is broadcast via radio and online, to discuss a wide variety library initiatives, events, and services. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of our municipal government offices that promote us through email, as well as the more interpersonal help of our Friends organization. We have established new connections amongst local news venues that use both print and virtual media, and continue to take advantage of our Facebook page and website for these purposes.

- ***Reach out to special client groups such as youth, teens, seniors, persons with disabilities, English language learners, underserved communities, etc., to meet their needs.*** The library collaborated with the Hamilton Township Department of Health multiple times this year to offer influenza and Covid vaccine clinics. No appointment was required, and Covid home test kits and masks were provided to interested parties (we offer test kits at all times). In addition, we hosted several clinics promoting Narcan awareness, working in conjunction with our Health Department as well as the several other organizations, including the Hamilton Alliance Against Abuse, and the Outreach and Harm Reduction Services branch of the Mercer County Department of Human Services. Information was distributed along with doses of Narcan, the medication used for the emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdose. Concurrently, we have assumed the role of a dispersal location for Narcan, providing doses free of charge for those who may not have the means to obtain them. For several months this year, we assisted a local Boy Scout troop with the collection of new and used footwear to aid the non-profit organization Soles4Souls, who in turn distribute the shoes to communities in need. The library coordinated with our Friends organization to donate twelve boxes of discarded library materials and unsold

books to the Henry J. Austin Health Center, another local non-profit organization and the largest non-hospital based care provider in Trenton. The books are to be used for a reading program in the waiting area of their pediatrics department. Staff conduct outreach to local school classrooms where English is spoken as a second language, introducing students to the resources we have to offer. We welcome many organizations that cater to the disabled, happily providing access to our resources and programming.

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

Objectives:

- ***Raise public awareness by promoting services, materials, and programs.*** Our close working relationship with various municipal government departments allows us promote information to the entire community through social media, email and via hard copy deliveries to locations like the Senior and Bromley Centers. We work with our “For the Love of Reading” book club and our Friends of the Library to promote events by word of mouth, through their social media sites, and utilizing various newspaper outlets. The library posts information on our Facebook page and website, and this year the Director was featured on “This Month in Hamilton”, a monthly interview series hosted by Mayor Jeff Martin. As previously mentioned, we are exploring the potential of providing a digital newsletter to our patrons starting in 2023.

- ***Ensure that all staff are fully conversant with Hamilton Free Public Library’s collections, resources, policies, and procedures.*** Changes made during this year’s revision of the Library Policies were shared with library staff to ensure that everyone was well versed in our procedures and practices. Updates and addendums to this and other documents that have occurred since the revision were provided to staff immediately, allowing time to familiarize themselves with the changes before they were instituted.

- ***Share the Library’s core values with staff and community.***

- ***Improve and increase outreach efforts.*** The library offers many off site visits to get our message out to the community. We participate annually in the National Night Out, sending several members of the library staff to Veterans Park to interact with members of our community to share information about the services, programs, materials and events we offer with people that may not otherwise be aware. We planned to have representation at Oktoberfest as well, but the event was unfortunately cancelled due to inclement weather. Our Children’s department works closely with our public schools through regular librarian outreach and classroom visitation, in addition to hosting trips from the schools to our establishment throughout the year.

**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.*** The delivery of library materials to residents unable to access our physical structure was put on hiatus this year as we work with the Township Legal Department

to consider viable options to provide this service without the use of personnel using their personal vehicles.

- ***Create partnerships with government entities and nonprofit organizations to provide access to Library collections and services.*** The library continues to form new, mutually beneficial partnerships with groups that can utilize our services, as well as relying on successful relationships that have worked in the past. At the beginning of the school year, we formed an arrangement with the Hamilton Township School District's Transition Program. Each weekday, members of this group (most suffering from muscular dystrophy or autism) visit the library to learn the skills needed to succeed on their own. The library participated in the Robinson Elementary School PTA "Around Our Town Egg Hunt", displaying an "egg" on our lawn for students to seek, and in the process making the library a destination. We continued working closely with the Township Health Department, collaborating on a new initiative that will result in a rotating display focusing on the promotion of health and wellness in the community. Each month a different topic will be addressed with a centrally displayed collection of flyers, best practices, contacts and library materials. In addition, we worked with the Health Department and the Olden Pharmacy to host a facemask and hand sanitizer distribution event, as well as the Narcan, influenza and Covid vaccine clinics mentioned earlier in this report. We continue our partnership with the Hamilton Police Department, providing lessons and resources to children participating in the Safety Town program each summer and during tours throughout the year, and our ongoing Hamilton Animal Shelter display provides information regarding adoptable pets.

### **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.*** This year, the library once again faced the loss of employees that had been serving for decades due to retirement. Their positions were filled from within by staff that demonstrated initiative and leadership potential over their many years of service, allowing opportunities for advancement to employees exceptionally qualified to do the work. A team member serving in a position crucial to the success of the library who has continued to assume more responsibility in that role was promoted to a title more fitting of the job performance. These promotions 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 aforementioned promotions of current staff into positions vacated by retirement fulfilled necessary losses without the addition of personnel, even as we

continue to function minus an employee that was never replaced. After careful vetting, several applicants were hired to fill the roles vacated by promotion. These new employees have not only more than ably completed their work, but have contributed incrementally to the improvement in morale. Although we were short staffed for several months this year as employees were absent long term for medical and maternity leave, our remaining workforce assumed the increased workload admirably and without complaint. With the adoption of our fine-free policy, we were able to discontinue the contracted services of the Unique Management collection agency, allowing for the significant amount of material recovery work that remains to be assumed by members of the staff. An experienced former employee was recalled to assist part-time during the busy summer and winter holiday seasons, helping with day-to-day operations when many of our regular staff are unavailable.

- ***Share knowledge throughout the organization, and encourage staff to avail themselves of both onsite and offsite professional development opportunities.*** Staff from each department are required to attend professional development webinars and in-person seminars to stay abreast of upgrades to our web based catalog system. Employees are encouraged to seek the best techniques to complete their work at an optimal level, thus better serving our patrons and sharing relevant knowledge among co-workers.

- ***Actively practice open, honest communication.***

- ***To the extent that it is fiscally possible, financially support professional development of staff.*** The return of more in-person programming has led to increased opportunities for staff development. With this possibility in mind, the budget line item for attendance will be significantly increased next year.

#### **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.***

In collaboration with the Hamilton Township School district, and with the participation of the Mayor, the Superintendent of Schools and the Library Board President (among others), the library hosted a “Read Aloud” program in support of Autism awareness. The event was broadcast live as well as being recorded and posted on YouTube for later viewing. Attendance at our “For the Love of Reading” book club continues to grow, with the option of joining virtually added during the pandemic, appealing to a wider audience and increasing participation. The Hamilton Creative Writers Club, a group of aspiring authors of all levels and genres, gather each week and work together to improve their writing ability. Both organizations are free and open to anyone that would like to attend.

● ***Develop programs in support of, and in coordination with, the collection.*** Throughout the year, our Children's department offers a multitude of events to coincide with holidays and important occasions to encourage the use of our collection. Included on this year's schedule were crafts and activities themed around Black Inventors and Inventions for Black History Month, St. Patrick's Day, Strong Women for Women's History Month, Mad Science's Fire and Ice show focusing on natural science, and many more. The library held our Third Annual Scarecrow Contest, drawing more than twice as many competitors this year to enchant our patrons with their funny, scary and adorable entries. To complement this event, a day of activities billed as a "Fall Festival" was scheduled, including the Unique Creatures Animal and Mad Science Halloween children's programs that drew a crowd of nearly one hundred attendees. Earlier in the month we welcomed back Master Storyteller Jonathan Kruk to present "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow", a dramatic retelling of the American classic. In association with the Robinson Elementary School PTA we partook in their spring break scavenger hunt by displaying an "egg" on our lawn for a week in April. Students were asked to hunt for numbered egg signs at destinations throughout Hamilton, and by becoming involved we hoped to draw patrons to the library at a usually quiet time of year. The library hosted a Covid-19 Memorial display adjacent to our front walkway area to commemorate Hamilton residents that lost their lives to this illness, while promoting safety precautions and better health practices to the community.

**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.***
- ***Define the role of the collection and the appropriate balance for types of materials, including formats, age levels and subjects.*** Our Assistant Township Historian, aided by a volunteer with many years of experience in the archiving field, have been weeding and reorganizing the enormous amount of ephemera that constitutes our local history collection. Items that make more sense elsewhere in the library are reclassified, while those that do not belong are rehomed to organizations in which they would be better suited, establishing connections at cultural establishments and institutions of higher learning around the country. This work led to a donation from a local author of his entire works for inclusion in our collection. Our professional and paraprofessional staff review and revise our resources to ensure the library contains the most up to date material available in a multitude of formats, while taking care to retain the popular classics that people expect and enjoy.
- ***Provide easy, user-focused access to the collection.*** As previously mentioned, the revisions made by our historian have contributed to a more orderly presentation of our local history materials, as well as the library collection in general. This accommodates enhanced ease of use and navigation for both our patrons and staff.

**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.*** After carefully reviewing the proposals submitted through the competitive bidding process, the library contracted with Ocean Computer Group, Inc. to assume the role of our Internet Technology managed services company. They were the most fiscally responsible choice, and the savings will increase as the years of the contract advance. While cost was a primary consideration, their vast experience with the management of our computer systems, in conjunction with their decade long relationship with our township Internet Technology and Police departments (from whom they received high marks) were also crucial in this decision. The library plans to utilize their services for the reconfiguration of our firewall and updating of our Microsoft products on all staff and public computers in the coming year. We received an increase in our award from the E-Rate Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries (a program that provides discounts to help eligible libraries obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access) by contracting with an independent consulting service. Payment for service is based on the amount we receive and is not due until the award is delivered. In addition, money will be budgeted in 2023 for the replacement of some of our outdated public use computers.

- ***Use the interactive potential of the catalog and website to get feedback from our users.*** We are currently exploring the potential of a digital newsletter to maintain communication with our patrons to share important news and information. Contact email and phone numbers are clearly posted on our webpage, organized by department with descriptions to help direct inquiring patrons whom they should reach out to with their query.

#### **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.***

- ***Work in collaboration with other organizations (libraries, schools, businesses) and cultural institutions to develop, co-sponsor and publicize programs.*** We strive to connect with a wide variety of organizations to provide entertaining and educational programming for our community. This year (and continuing going forward), the library began a collaborative effort with our Township Health Department to present a monthly rotating display focused on promoting health and wellness in the community. Aided by our Friends organization, we also offered reading materials for visitors to the Township Health Department's Covid vaccine clinics, which took place multiple times a week at various locations in Hamilton. We hosted an estate-planning seminar presented by an attorney with over 50 years' experience in the field,

including time as an Assistant Prosecutor and Municipal Court Judge. Guests were provided with information pertaining to Powers of Attorney, Living Wills, Trusts, Asset Protection, Healthcare Proxies and much more. We continue to make connections with more and different local artisans to revitalize our cultural displays highlighting a wide variety of media. This year we added several new exhibits to our outdoor sculpture garden, and are looking ahead to planning a 10-year anniversary celebration in 2023. We have been in contact with our school system to host the Hamilton School District Art Show next year as well, after pandemic restrictions led to an absence of several years. All of the programs and events mentioned were offered at no expense to our visiting public or Hamilton's taxpayers.

**Goal: Optimize the use of meeting rooms.**

Objectives:

- *Maintain a centralized listing where all events and programs held in the Library can be posted.*
- *Communicate to the community the availability of and limitations on the use of meeting rooms.* Meeting room information is available through our website for patrons with questions or those seeking to use the space. Non-profit meeting room use continues to rise each year, while profit organizations have expressed increased interest as well due to our reasonable fee structure as compared to other local options.

**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.* As previously mentioned, the expired contract of our former internet technology managed services provider led to the search for a replacement. The company chosen offered the lowest cost and proven experience as affirmed by their work with other township departments. The same steps were taken in regards to our air conditioning system preventative maintenance agreement. After careful review of proposals submitted through the competitive bidding process, each with a requirement to perform specific maintenance services on a set schedule, cost became the deciding factor. We agreed on a two-year contract with the option of three one-year renewals going forward. A T1 line used for our hosted telephone service was replaced by a dedicated fiber circuit, providing a higher reliability rating, the ability to expand bandwidth for future data usage if needed, and the inclusion of a voice failover system to our data connection. Our endeavor to have the restrooms renovated took a step forward with the assistance of our Township's Assistant Business Administrator. She enlisted a local architectural

firm to provide a “Draft for Discussion” regarding their findings after a tour of our facility. This document included estimated cost ranges for each restroom, possible upgrades that may require alterations to make them ADA compliant, and explanations of potential expenditures that could result from service fees and permits. We were also informed of potential costs related to identification, testing and remediation of hazardous materials prevalent when the library was constructed.

● ***Explore with the Township of Hamilton, opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of the Library.*** Volunteers from the Hamilton Township Environmental Commission were joined by township employees in their efforts to rehabilitate our rain garden. Weeds and refuse were removed while fresh plantings and mulch were added to restore this water saving resource. In addition, literature and seed packets were donated to the library for the use of our patrons. Our environmental impact is included in all discussions regarding the aforementioned restroom renovations, with water saving measures, air hand dryers and other modifications considered to reduce our impact on the planet. The library continues to take full advantage of the “sustainable shelves” program offered by our materials provider, where books, digital video discs, compact discs and other items that we are removing from the collection are returned to the company for resale or recycling. This not only reduces our contribution to local landfills, but also improves our bottom line as we receive credit from the company to apply towards future purchases. We continue to await a decision on the grant-funded renovation of our windows throughout the building.

**Goal: Make the best use of available space.**

Objective:

● ***Regularly evaluate the use of Library spaces, making changes as needed, within fiscal limitations.*** The weeding and reorganization of our local history collection has provided a much more ordered and usable space for our patrons, community members and researchers. An “Open Call for Sculptures” that we promoted in local media led to the addition of more works of art to our sculpture park, and the collaboration with our Township Health Department on a health and wellness display optimizes usage of an area of the library that had previously been underutilized.

**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.***

● ***Raise our cost consciousness and encourage staff participation in cost containment efforts.***

We strive to be fiscally responsible and save taxpayer dollars by any means possible. The library maintains contracts with local companies that have a proven record of accomplishment, especially when greater savings can be realized. The Director worked closely with library staff and township personnel to realize savings on projects that were not covered by our service contracts, utilizing employees to handle technology projects and obtaining guidance for assistance with machine repairs that would otherwise have resulted in service charges. Policy

changes instituted by our Board of Trustees, accompanied by the efforts of library staff, have allowed us to terminate the contracted assistance arrangement with a collection agency that in recent years has produced minimal dividends. The library will realize years of savings from the retirements of several long time employees, as newly hired staff will receive entry-level pay.

- ***Demonstrate operating efficiencies to the community.*** The library continues to seek ways to provide the best service at the lowest cost for our taxpayer-funded library. The contracted assistance provided for both internet technology and HVAC maintenance were obtained using the competitive bidding process. The restroom renovation estimates performed by a professional architectural firm were provided at no charge, allowing us to realize thousands of dollars in savings. We continue to improve the size, quality and content of our collection through the receipt of substantial donations from our generous public.

**Goal: Broaden our resources.**

Objectives:

- ***Maintain a centrally coordinated volunteer program that includes training and recognition of volunteers.*** The library welcomed a young volunteer for several weeks this year to learn valuable job skills while helping us with our increased summer workload. This newly developed relationship with the Summer Career Exploration Internship program, administered by the New Jersey Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the Department of Developmental Disabilities, promises to lead to ongoing partnerships in the future. Volunteer assistants from the environmental commission that rejuvenated our rain garden were lauded by the Library Board of Trustees for their efforts. The volunteer with archival training continues to lend her expertise in the reorganization of our local history collection. The assistance of teens in need of community service hours to fulfill school or other organizational requirements are always graciously accepted.

- ***Explore ways to increase resources through community and Library partnerships, fundraising and grants.*** The library, assisted by our township contacted grant writers, applied for multiple funding opportunities this year. These included the Library Services and Technology Act Grant to address potential children's programming possibilities, Congressional funding for window renovation and replacement, and the National Medal for Museum and Library Service Grant, which awards a financial stipend. Ongoing interaction with the arts community has led to continually changing displays of artwork that refresh and revitalize our space. This year involved the aforementioned "Open Call for Sculptors", which led to the donation of works by three new artists for our outdoor garden, as well as automotive and historical photography collections housed indoors. Regular communication with the New Jersey Department of Labor continues to provide information on employment opportunities for our patrons on a weekly basis, and our ongoing relationship with the nonprofit Nottingham Garden Club allows us to reap the benefits of their skill through the beautification of our exterior grounds. The always-appreciated financial support we receive from our Friends of the Library organization helps us provide goods and services we could not otherwise afford. Next year we

look forward to the post-pandemic return of the Volunteer Tax Assistance Program, a group that works hand in hand with our Reference Librarians to assist low-income residents, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and limited English speaking taxpayers.

**\*\*\* *End* \*\*\***