



51 Van Zant Street: East Norwalk, CT. 06855

Website: www.eastnorwalklibrary.org

December 30, 2022

A Special Annual report covering two unsettling years 2020-2022

This annual report is unlike any other because I want to document what has been the experience of the East Norwalk Association Library since the start of the pandemic in March of 2020. I will talk about our highs and lows during this global affliction of which we are still dealing.

On March 14, 2020 like all public venues, the East Norwalk Association Library was forced to shut its doors to the public for a period of time as per emergency CDC protocols concerning the Corona virus pandemic.

It was about four months until the Library was able to open in some fashion. We did re-open to a new normal. In July of 2020 the Library resumed operations with limited services. We, like other libraries, provided curbside library service so patrons could get access to materials and we also set up outdoor Internet seating stations so people could still have access to the Internet via the Library's Wi-Fi service. We also researched performers who were willing to do not just do zoom programs but also in-person outdoor programs. Those who confirmed to do in person programs, we set up chairs and tents in the parking lot and continued our practice of presenting family friendly programs for the community over the summer of 2020.

As I stated on Facebook, Thank you to our local community who walked to the Library each weekend that we had a show to support and be entertained with their families.

As for staff, the Library was able to keep all staff members working from the start of the pandemic. When the Library was closed, we staggered schedules so that no two people were in the building at the same time. Although time felt like it stopped for many, the business of running a library kept moving forward. Bills kept coming in and had to be processed and paid. Tasks like book selections, computer maintenance, cleaning, collecting, and answering the mail etc., still had to be done and planning our re-opening strategy had to be done. So Library staff kept working.

In January of 2021, The Library expanded its hours and allowed in-person visits by appointments. At this time, the CDC recommended limiting the number of people in public buildings. We followed some of the guidelines that the City of Norwalk Public Library set in place i.e., appointments, in addition to continuing curbside services and

outdoor programming. Later in 2021 and according to CDC safety guidelines we eliminated the need for appointments and asked that people keep social distance, and we required mask wearing while inside the upper level of the Library. As people became more comfortable with the “new” new normal, people started to request the use of the lower-level meeting hall for family gathering. We also started to do indoor programs in the lower level as people felt more comfortable being inside.

The Year 2022 saw a much more relaxed Library atmosphere. Although because we are a super small staff, we still required that patrons wear masks so that staff can stay healthy and the Library can stay open. At least until flu season ends.

Grant money slowly came in so that our 2022 summer programs were not as plentiful but after the money arrived we more than made up for that with our 2022 fall and our winter programming selections.

The bustle of patrons is slowly coming back too. Again, as people feel more comfortable sitting inside etc... And, as families gather the hall rental is picking up too.

Financials looking back, present and looking ahead

As stated earlier, the Library kept its staff working and paid. We had attained a grant just before the pandemic broke which enabled us to do programming. During the pandemic the state and federal government offered grants to help non-profit small business keep their staff working like the PPP and other grants to assistance for keeping operations going like the Covid relief grants, the summer relief grants and the Norwalk block grants. The Library applied to many eligible resources and was thankfully awarded many times. This is how we fortunately prospered and kept afloat during the pandemic.

As you may know or may not know, we are not affiliated with the Norwalk Public Library system, nor do we receive state or federal funding. We are an association that is open to the public for Library service. Our need for grants and patron support is always needed and so appreciated.

Ring in 2023

We are looking forward to serving the community. As the economic outlook maybe slow in 2023, we hope to be able to continue to bring free family friendly programs, free adult programs, free internet access and WIFI, free best seller books, magazines, and topical non-fiction books to the community.

We also hope that if you are able, that you show your support through money donations and/or the renting of the meeting hall for your parties and family gatherings. Book donations are good, but they do not bring in the kind of money that the book donor hopes it will bring in for the Library. But we still welcome your support.

Regarding staffing for 2023, we hope to fill the void in our staffing level, as one of our long-term employees moved out of state; although, I do not see the library hiring soon. This is because earlier this year we got the news that our match funding from our biggest advocate the TTD will go away in 2023. Ironically, this is happening due to our

success in fundraising and grant awards and the library being able to show more financial independence. Without the match, we will lose over 11 thousand dollars. So we are reviewing our assets, strengths and weaknesses so that our 2023 will be strong.

Happy, Healthy and Blessed 2023 to all!

Sylvia Archibald, Library Director,

East Norwalk Improvement Association

Doing Business As- East Norwalk Association Library