





Opposite page, from front left: Debbie Maynard, Jessica Moskowitz, Molly Camera and Nancy McMahon. Above: Molly Camera organizes the new books section where patrons can review books they've read.

More Than Books

The Pequannock Township Public Library has become a community hub with digital resources and events for all ages.

BY DEBBIE WALSH

The image of a public library has evolved from shelves full of Dewey-Decimal-System-arranged books in a space where you can barely hear a pin drop to a vibrant community hub. The Pequannock Township Public Library is not just a place where patrons check out books; it is a place where the community gathers.

If you have not been to the library in a while, you might be surprised to see the array of services and activities offered and designed to meet the diverse needs of the community. From children's story times and educational workshops to social events and technological resources, the library is a cornerstone of community engagement.

As co-president of Friends of the Library, Georgette Braga sees firsthand how the library is not merely a place to check out books but is a place that provides welcoming space for people of all ages to learn, interact and enjoy all sorts of activities.

"The library is not just for people who like to read," Braga says. "It is a gathering place. That is how a lot of people in town feel about the library. It is a community center as much as it is a library. That speaks volumes about the leadership here."

Transforming Services

Debbie Maynard had been the Pequannock library's director for 10 years before recently accepting an opportunity at the East Hanover Public Library. The search is on for her replacement. According to Maynard, Pequannock library has 9,361 patrons, which is an impressive number considering the community's population totals about 15,500.

One of the biggest changes Maynard saw during her tenure was the expansion of digital materials, which transformed the library from being a building with finite hours to an information center with 24/7 access.

Pequannock belongs to the Main Library

Alliance, a consortium of more than 40 libraries that share materials and services. So if Pequannock does not have a book you need, it can quickly get a copy from another alliance member.

Additionally, with access to computers, the internet and various multimedia resources, the library helps bridge the digital divide, offering essential support for those who may lack these facilities at home or may be a bit intimidated by today's technology.

One of the most popular services is having mobile Wi-Fi hotspots available for patrons to borrow. This service is invaluable for those who do not have an internet connection at home and for individuals heading to vacation spots without internet service.

The library also offers Nook e-readers, generously supplied by Friends of the Library, allowing members to explore digital reading conveniently.



Nancy McMahon checks books at the front service desk.

Plenty to Do

The library boasts of programing geared to all age groups. And activities do not shut down over the summer. The library's vibrant and diverse range of activities ensures that there is something for everyone, regardless of age or interest. Examples for different age groups include:

- **Adults:** Engage in creative activities such as birdhouse and trivet painting, movie night, trivia, sketching or participation in social and leisure activities such as canasta, mahjong, chair yoga, knitting and crochet.
- **Teens:** Enjoy exciting events like Shark Week trivia, magnet making and monochrome flower painting.
- **Children:** Take part in fun outdoor activities such as chalk drawing, play giant board games or have Lego fun.

"What I like about Pequannock Library is there is something for everyone, and residents take advantage of everything that is available," Maynard says. "We have everyone from babies coming in for story time to seniors, who are very involved. We are what is called a third place for people. Besides home and work, we are that extra place where people can spend their time. You could go to Starbucks, but most times [at a coffee shop] you need to be a customer and buy something."

Maynard emphasizes that running the library is a team effort made possible by the dedicated work of its staff. Key team members include Molly Camera, head of adult services; Nancy McMahon, circulation supervisor; and Jessica Moskowitz, head of children's services. Each of these individuals plays a crucial role in ensuring the library runs smoothly and meets the varied needs of its patrons.

You've Got to Have Friends

Maynard also expresses gratitude to the 103-member-strong Friends of the Library for its unwavering support. The organization provides invaluable financial assistance through various fundraising events, including an annual book sale. This group's contributions help enhance the library's offerings and enable it to better serve the community.

One of the cultural initiatives sponsored by the Friends is a concert series. Despite threatening weather in June, over 150 people attended a Kootz concert. Weather ushered the concert indoors. In May, 250 attendees enjoyed the Friends-sponsored event called An Evening of Jazz at Pequannock Township High School. The event featured performances by the Bloomingdale Cornet Big Band, the PTHS Jazz Band and the PTHS Noctaves, an a cappella group.

The Friends do not just support local cultural events but also encourage library members to explore artistic and educational opportunities outside of town by providing museum passes to the Museum of Modern Art, the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, the Liberty Science Center, the 9/11

Memorial and Museum and more.

Nancy McMahon, the Friends' other co-president, says the museum passes do not gather dust on a shelf and are one of the ways the group helps defray costs for patrons. The Friends rely on suggestions from library staff for the needs of cardholding members.

"The people of Pequannock know we are a welcoming place and that they'll be greeted by a smiling face," says McMahon. "They know we are happy they came in and we are there to help them find a book, conduct research or use technology. We want to be a hub of activity and a valued resource for the community."

Debbie Walsh has 30 years of experience writing for various newspaper publications and more recently as a ghost blogger. A semiretired sports mom, she enjoys dining out with friends, reading and playing golf in her spare time.

Right: Debbie Maynard served as the Pequannock Library director for 10 years.
Below: Jessica Moskowitz shelves books in the Children's Department.

