

CULTURE AND RECREATION

REPORT OF THE WESTON CULTURAL COUNCIL

The Weston Cultural Council is charged with distributing money allotted to the Town by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency supporting the Arts, Humanities and Sciences. The MCC received \$7.3 million from the state legislature for the Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program. Weston's allocation for calendar year 2005 was level funded at \$2000; a distribution based on town population and property values. In addition, some interest has accrued which allowed us to grant \$100 more, for a total of \$2100.

Grants are made to individuals or groups to support worthy projects that enhance the cultural side of our lives and enhance our appreciation of our cultural environment. Grants are also available to educational institutions (the PASS grant program) for such activities as field trips to concerts, museums, etc.

Applications for LCC grants were due at the Town Hall on Oct. 15, 2004. A public meeting of the Weston Cultural Council was held on Nov. 7, 2004 at which time the submissions were discussed and the grants awarded. The Council received 26 applications requesting a total of \$12,340. Three grants were fully funded and three were partially funded for a total of \$2,100.

All of the grants are subject to approval by the MCC and funds are made available in the spring of 2005. Grant recipients are required to publicize their events, which are generally open to the public, and interested residents are urged to take advantage of these cultural opportunities.

The following is a list of the grants approved at the local level this fall which are awaiting state approval:

Drumlin Farm—Revels Circle of Song at the May Fair (May 1, 2005; 12-5 PM) to celebrate Drumlin Farm's 50th birthday; target audience is families from Weston and other surrounding towns.

DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park—Art in the Park 2005 (June 12, 2005; 10 AM–5 PM)—to help pay for art supplies and performer fees; target audience is people of all ages interested in contemporary art and artists.

Golden Tones "Singing Through Our Lives" Music Program — 2 performances for the elderly and their families in Weston:

Sunrise Assisted Living of Weston on Feb. 11th

Epoch Senior Health Center on April 14th.

Project Concern Youth Dance Company — Hip-hop dance performance by inner-city adolescents for Weston adolescents and their families.

Michael Tougias — Night of the Blizzard: The True Story of Heroism and Tragedy aboard the pilot boat Can Do during the Blizzard of 1978: Slide presentation and lecture based on an upcoming book will be held at the Weston Public Library for all residents interested in MA history and heroes.

John Root—Gaslight Era Musical Concert Interactive performance of music from the turn of the 20th century, with singer accompanying himself on the piano and on other instruments, at the Weston Public Library for all residents.

The Weston Cultural Council is currently composed of six residents (5-10 allowed) who have been appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Tenure is limited by statute to two three-year terms. Members are appointed when a vacancy occurs, so interested residents are invited to contact the Selectmen about openings. For further information, please contact the Chair, Lynn Taff.

REPORT OF THE WESTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The mission of the Weston Public Library is to provide materials, resources and programs for lifelong learning and enjoyment. The Library serves the entire community by making available collections on a broad array of subjects of interest to its patrons. It is a forum for the community, providing a welcoming and well-maintained facility for meetings, informal gatherings, lectures and other cultural events.

Weston Public Library had another busy year in which we circulated over 294,000 items to our patrons. This is the highest circulation for a town in our population range. Overall, our circulation decreased slightly from last year. This change may be attributed to the re-opening of Wellesley Library, and fewer hours of service due to the cutbacks that occurred here in 2003. Our circulation rose 40% the year that Wellesley Library closed for renovations, and our circulation has only decreased by 7% since they reopened, which means we are keeping the patrons that discovered the jewel that is Weston Public Library. Weston Public Library is truly fortunate to be so supported by its residents, and to have such a professional and friendly staff.

Adult Services

In 2004, we saw an increase in demand for DVD feature films; "Speed Reads" which are bestselling books available for 1 week loan; new books on CD; and new fiction and nonfiction books. Hundreds of new DVDs were added in 2004, partially funded through the generosity of the Friends of Weston Public Library. Films include bestselling titles, art house films, independent, foreign, family, classics, and film festival winners as well as cable and public television titles. Brochures, which are updated weekly, list our newest DVDs, and are available at the circulation desk. We are updating our Large Print collection which is displayed in the periodical reading room on two display towers. The towers were purchased by the Friends of Weston Public Library in support of expanding this area of our collection. You may have noticed that we are shifting our fiction and nonfiction books. This is to make room for our expanding collection of non-print materials such as books on CD, and DVDs.

We encourage our patrons to sign up for email notification from the library. By giving us your email address you can be notified when an item is on hold for you. You can also manage your account online at <http://library.minlib.net>. You will need a 4 digit pin number which you can initiate online or at the circulation desk in the library. Your email address is never shared with any other organization nor is it used for any promotional purposes. By accessing the library catalog online, you can request items that are displayed as "on order" in the catalog. This ensures that Weston residents get access to our newest items first, as the computerized catalog gives Weston patrons priority for any of our items. We will be offering classes in using the online catalog over the next few months, and you can always ask for help with the catalog at our Reference desk.

We are indebted to our volunteers who help keep the library in order. Margaret Young is an indispensable aide in Local History, while Mary Parker and Ed McKearney help keep the stacks in good order. Gene Travers works diligently in Technical Services.

Reference

Use of the public computers declined overall from 2003's record numbers, with just over 12,000 library patrons signing up to use the eight public computers. In September, we replaced our aging public computers with new Dell computers. The new computers are faster and more reliable, and give our patrons access to the latest version of Microsoft Office. The response has been enthusiastic, and we have seen computer usage increase considerably since September.

Many students come to the library after school to work on homework projects, but face stiff competition for computer time. To support these students, the two public computers in our

reference area have been designated “**Homework Stations**” between the hours of 2:45 and 5:15 from Monday through Thursday. During those hours, use of the computers is limited to elementary, middle and high school students working on school projects.

We have developed a Homework Station web page with links to helpful websites, including online databases, the Weston Public School websites (where students can review their homework assignments), the Minuteman Library Network catalog, and homework helper sites. This page appears as the home page on the Homework Stations during after school hours. During most afternoons, an additional reference librarian is available to help with homework questions. We have seen a steady increase in the number of students using the Homework Stations since the beginning of the project in October. So far, the Homework Stations average 63 uses per month.

While the new computers are more visible to our patrons, we have continued to improve our reference collection as well. We look for new books, such as the *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, to fill gaps, while we continuously update our collection with new editions of books, such as the 8th edition of National Geographic’s *Atlas of the World*. More than 200 titles were added in 2004.

Youth Services

“Explore Other Worlds” our 2004 Summer Reading Program, proved highly successful this year. With 314 participants we topped last year's numbers. 230 children in the Young Readers and Reading Programs elected to count how many books they read, and read a total of 9,034, or 39 books per participant, up just a bit on average over last year's figure of 35. Eighty-four children in the Reading Program recorded how many hours they spent reading, and came up with an amazing total of 3,284.25 hours, or 39 hours per child, toppling last year's record of 30 hours.

Library programs in Youth Services are very popular. Due to some unexpected staff changes we merged some programs this year and ended up with fewer programs offered; but the number of children attending those programs was higher. Currently, we offer Storytimes for children starting at age two. There are plans in the works for starting programs for younger patrons, since we now have staff who can sing in front of an audience. Look for that sometime in 2005. After school programs for elementary school age children have been going well, with a number of Book Clubs and one Pop-up Book Workshop over the course of the year. As always, crafts and programs were a good portion of our Summer Reading fun. Over the course of the summer, parents and children made 1,670 crafts, offered all summer and rotating on a weekly basis. Children and parents also had the option of attending both library Summer Storytimes and special events, including: The Higgins Armory Museum, Wing Masters, The Science Museum's Exploring the Night Sky.

Over 370 people celebrated the end of our Summer Reading Program by joining us for an ice cream party in August. We thank our regular staff and the summer staff – Caroline Carlson and Alison Iuliano – who helped make it possible. Special visits this year included Ed the Wizard at Halloween and Elmo and Newscaster Heather Unruh for a Storytime in December.

There have been some staff changes this year. Karen Baldwin, who has worked in Youth Services since 1997, dramatically decreased her hours in September when she took a school librarian job. Although still working some Sundays, we truly miss her expertise in programming and children's literature on a daily basis. Luckily, the library did find another excellent staff member. Beth Katsoris joined the team in September. A recent graduate of Simmons College with a Masters in Library Service, Beth has fit right into Youth Services with enthusiasm and her own brand of programming. Suzanne Feld joined us as a page this fall.

Several volunteers have helped out in Youth Services over the course of the year. Karen Sedat, our Pop-up Book Program leader, ran her last group in the spring. For over ten years she

has volunteered with this wonderful program, and her presence will be missed. Summer volunteers Iris and Molly Hermann and Taeko Nakashima helped with aspects of the reading program and were invaluable during the Summer Reading Celebration. We welcome Mary Jane McGovern, who has been providing Preschool drop in Storytimes on Fridays. Her years of experience as a teacher are a superb addition to library programs.

Young Adults

The Young Adult Department provides books and media and programs of interest to local teens and "tweens". Weston is fortunate to have a separate section of the library for this population. This YA corner provides space for young people to "hang out" when they visit the library. Our circulation of materials for teens continues to be strong relative to towns of similar population in the MetroWest region.

The YA librarian collects critically reviewed teen fiction as well as popular leisure reading. The YA Department recognizes the importance of music in teenage life and seeks the input of patrons when purchasing titles for the YA music collection. Films and magazines popular with this age group are in constant circulation. The coming year will see the installment of a *Teen Issues* section in the Adult Main Collection which will include books about life issues that young people may face such as peer pressure, developing relationships, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Through the combined efforts of the Young Adult, Reference and Adult Departments, the library seeks to support the Middle and High School curriculums. Our staff assists students through high school and beyond with school assignments seven days per week.

YA programming highlights this year included two beading workshops, a games night, the Summer Reading Program and a bookmaking workshop.

Technical Services

The Technical Services Department added over 7,400 items to our database this year. Changes in media type, such as the popular DVDs, require more time to process each item and to get in the system. The staff in Technical Services aims to get new items into the hands of our patrons as soon as possible, and there is little lag time between ordering items, and getting them on the shelves.

Arts and Exhibitions Committee

The past year was again a busy and exciting one for the gallery at the Weston Public Library. Two of the exhibitors were graduates of the Weston schools: in January Anisha Sandhu's photographs, inspired by nature, were well received, and in April Scott Listfield's "Astronaut" paintings were popular, especially with young viewers. Rebekah Gardiner, a Weston resident, had a show of book models and the tools used in bookbinding. In addition she gave a demonstration of how a book is made and assembled. Another Weston resident, Mary Jo Rines, exhibited her striking watercolor paintings in the gallery in March. Nick Wheeler's wonderful architectural photographs were on display in May. In June, Gale Parker, a Weston resident and child photographer, mounted a lovely show of children engaged in childhood activities. In July, Paul Angiollo, a sculptor and carver, put together a "forest" of hanging compositions and free-standing sculptures fashioned out of "found" wood. September brought another photographer, Ed Quinn, now of Weston, with his moving pictures of New York City. Another resident, Murray Gross, had an exciting and colorful exhibit of watercolors in October. And finally, Sylvia Sturgis rounded out the year with an exhibit of portraits and landscapes done in both oils and watercolor.

Music Committee

The Music Committee, in cooperation with the Friends' of the Library, sponsors concerts at the library to promote an appreciation of music and enhance cultural opportunities in Weston. This year fourteen concerts, representing a wide variety of music, were presented. They included pianists, classical chamber ensembles, Dixieland and jazz/rock bands, folk musicians, holiday music and the Terezin Chamber Music Foundation. MusicFest, a day of music performed by Weston's own musicians, returned for the fourth year. All concerts are free and open to the public.

Friends of Weston Library

The mission statement of The Friends of the Weston Public Library, a group of six hundred ninety three members, is "...to support a strong and active public library for the town of Weston and to provide, where needed, resources not otherwise funded."

It is the Friends' intent to enhance the fundamental library services by providing programs, lecture series, and trips of educational value to the townspeople. We also provide support for ongoing programs, some of which include the Children's Summer Reading Program and craft activities, the Military History Group, the Ice Cream Social, museum passes as well as the restoration and cataloging of Weston's Historical Archives. The organization provides for the delivery of books and audio visual materials to the homebound. We recently contributed monies for three new kiosks for DVDs and books and made a substantial contribution for a new classical DVD collection. These activities are financed by the townspeople through membership dues, donations and contributions to and attendance at our Annual Book Sale, an event that the dealers tell us is one of the most upscale in the area. The Friends' Board of twenty-two members, working together with the Library Director and her staff, is committed to doing its best for the library. We appreciate the townspeople's support and will continue in our efforts to enhance Weston's library and make it a very special place for the citizens of our community. All library users are welcome to join the Friends!

REPORT OF THE RECREATION DEPARTMENT

2004 was busy year for the Recreation Department as we continued to administer a wide variety of programs, both new and old, for the citizens of the town. As in years past, the Community Center continued to be a special gathering place for town residents – whether it was hosting birthday parties or bar mitzvahs, school reunions or the annual Holiday Luncheon for the town’s senior citizens, there was always a crowd of happy faces parading throughout the Great Hall and the classrooms around it. The Center remains in constant use and is an invaluable asset to the town.

The recreation staff consists of seven full-time employees ably assisted by an ever-evolving staff of part-time help. Whether planning classes or mowing fields, manning guard stations at the town pool or serving as camp counselors at Camp ABC, the eclectic blend of individuals whom the department employs were as friendly as they were qualified.

The recreation budget has always been part of the town’s general fund but in FY 04, town meeting created an Enterprise Account for the Department. This past fiscal year the budget was \$1,154,191 of which \$ 854,440 was offset from users’ fees.

Once again, the Recreation Department spent the year offering an exceptional variety of programs for people of all ages in the town, many of which were offered in our new Center. Among our most popular offerings were classes on Adult Exercise programs, Youth Cooking, the Father/Daughter Valentine Dance and Middle School Rec. Nights at the Community Center. Our summer camps were well attended, with some 1291 campers taking advantage our diverse and comprehensive offerings during the seven weeks that our camp programs were in operation.

The town pool was once again a gathering spot for residents who took advantage of the exceptional facility and programs we provide there. Once again, overall attendance was down from years past, and once again, the drop in numbers availing themselves of this exceptional facility is attributable primarily to inconsistent weather and annoying temperature fluctuations. Still, over 6,400 general admission patrons visited us during the summer and made our family nights and theme nights events to remember. As the nearby construction on the schools finally concluded, the Pool once again became a wonderful place for families to go and swim in a safe and clean environment. During the summer, Wednesday night concerts on the Town Green were also a big hit, with families bringing picnic dinners and socializing to the sounds of a variety of musical groups during July and August.

During the winter months, open gym, access to the indoor swimming pool, the ever-burgeoning Red Wave Swimming Program for the town’s youth as well as adult basketball programs (including a Men’s Over 40 Basketball League which, oddly enough, had over 40 participants enrolled this year) continue to complement the arts and crafts, musical and exercise offerings that the department provides.

As usual, the diversity of programs the town is able to offer and smoothly run can be directly attributed to Doug MacDougall and his dedicated staff. They continue to deliver top-quality programs at affordable prices – we are indeed fortunate to have such devoted, tireless workers comprising the recreation staff. Please remember to thank them for their efforts the next time that you see them.