

## Community Life Flourishes at Your Library

By Jill Owens

As we point out whenever we have the opportunity, a modern library is more than just a book warehouse. With a traffic count of 134,576 visitors last fiscal year, you know this is dynamic place!

Books are still the core offering, but did you know that free meeting room space is among our more popular uses? The meeting rooms at the library regularly see 100-150 reservations per month. Civic and not-for-profit groups are welcome to reserve our various sized rooms on a first come, first served basis. We even have videoconference capability.

There are other ways your library serves as a handily-located hub of community activity.

We serve as a point of contact for others who can offer you services, such as the popular Talking Book service for the visually challenged. We are a pick-up point for any tax forms sent out from the IRS, as well as other government-related information.

The library houses the main office and services for the Platte Valley Literacy Association which assists a wide spectrum of adult and family learners.

In addition to art you can borrow, you'll find two art galleries and their accompanying activities in our lower level.

Young people frequent the library for activities, to hang out with their friends in our teen space, or to wait for rides.

The library also offers programming to other groups. Did you know that through-out last fiscal year 11,285 children participated in at least one library program (Accelerated Reader, Outreach, Summer Reading Program, weekly Story Time or StoryART sessions, and the rest)?

Young Adult programming also offers a wide variety of learning and fun. By the time you read this, we'll have just held our first ever teen-lock-in.

Adult programs offered by the Friends of the library are both fun and educational. It is not too late to get your tickets for the adults-only Murder Mystery evening April 27<sup>th</sup> at the library. Tickets may be purchased from the Columbus Art Gallery in the lower level of the Library, or at the Circulation desk of the Library.

This past weekend the Friends of the Library, the Book Review Club, and the Columbus Art Council collaborated to bring Joe Starita to our library for a program about his book on Ponca Chief Standing Bear's heartbreaking story.

Free internet access is also a very popular service, as are other uses of our public access computer lab. Last fiscal year our computer lab had 40,098 individual uses. Of course WiFi is available too.

Also popular are the Central Community College Extended Learning beginner computer classes held most weeks of the year in our lab.

Did you know that you can watch a DVD at one of the viewing stations in the library? Just bring the DVD you wish to watch to the circulation desk (whether it is one of ours or one of yours) and staff will direct you to a station, complete with headphones, and you can sit back and enjoy a movie or another type of DVD.

A download station for audio books is offered for patrons who wish to put OverDrive's downloadable audio books on their listening devices, but don't have a computer at home.

Happily, the libraries that resemble mausoleums are a thing of the past. You can still have a quiet room for study, but modern libraries are more like a community gathering place or community front porch in practice, especially in places that do not have community centers.

Whether you're in the library browsing the books, learning in the lab, congregating in a conference room, relaxing in the reading area, teeming with the teens, perusing a periodical, participating in a program, appreciating the art, or enjoying electronics, the library is the place to be – the heart of the community.