

May 22, 2019

Dear Editor

What a time we have found ourselves and our community in. I hope you are safe and healthy and feel as I do – so grateful to live in the caring community of Canandaigua.

Between seeing so many people support our first responders, healthcare workers and those stocking the shelves of our grocery stores or making it possible to take curbside delivery of food – it has been heartwarming to see our community support one another in this challenging time.

While the doors to Wood Library may be locked – our staff has been hard at work creating new ways to continue our mission by transitioning many of our library programs from in-person to virtual and creating interesting, thoughtful content and fun activities for our community who are sheltering in place.

I've always felt that Wood Library is our community and I've never been prouder of our organization, staff, trustees and volunteers who are working hard and creatively to transition our services from in-person to online.

We now offer virtual and vibrant learning time for children of all ages including our infamous Mary Ferris leading virtual stories hours from her home. Our StoryWalk at Baker Park (a partnership with Literacy Volunteers and Canandaigua Rotary) is updated and there for you as well as oodles of fun activities parents can do while homeschooling their children (if you haven't seen our director Jenny Goodemote and her daughter Avery's cooking tutorials you are missing something special).

Our teen librarian has been supporting our teens helping them connect via movie watch parties, game nights and we continue to support many community groups helping them transition to online meetings such as the Canandaigua Writer's Group, the Parkinson's Support Group, the New Yorker Discussion Group, and the Knitter's Konnection. We've also added exercise classes, virtual concerts and online discussions.

While we anticipate opening in Phase 4 – sometime in June -- we don't yet know how that will happen or what services we can safely offer. However, our staff is hard at work continuing to create new and fascinating virtual programs. You can soon look for a virtual wine tasting with Heron Hill Winery, financial workshops in conjunction with Credit Counseling Services of Rochester and DIY videos on baking and crafting. We will also be hosting our annual 5K as a virtual run or roll event!

We miss you but are so happy we can continue to serve you – our community -- by increasing the number of complimentary WiFi hotspots we offer to households that don't have internet. While we can't open our doors yet, we have increased our digital services purchasing more ebooks and audio books available through OWWL2Go. Since we've been closed, 119 patrons have registered for digital library cards to access downloadable ebooks and audiobooks. We continue to add additional services to support our community sheltered at home including investigating your family history via Ancestry.com; learning a new language via Mango Languages and working closely with the Canandaigua City School District, students can now access OWWL2Go through their Braves account without a library card.

However, all of this is not without its challenges. Because 70% of our budget is supported by our community and local taxpayers, 30% of our budget must come from other revenue sources like our Annual Fund Drive, special fundraiser events, book sales, state aid, grants, and fines and fees. Like many of you reading this – our ability to raise funds is limited and uncertain given the pandemic. Just as we are all looking our own financials – so too have the Wood Library Board of Trustees. After making some tough choices including furloughing staff, putting many projects on hold and making cuts wherever we can – we have created a leaner budget for the remainder of the year.

We are committed to continue to offer the services we know you are relying on during this time and our 2021 budget provides the funds necessary to operate. While we did make many cuts – this budget had to account for increases in technology and virtual service costs, healthcare, utilities, state mandated increases in hourly minimum wage costs.

To help support the library's 2021 operating budget, Wood Library will be seeking a 2.86% increase over our current \$700,268 levy. The change will increase the library property tax rate by approximately six tenths of one cent per thousand of assessed property valuation, *adding just 90 cents to the entire tax bill of a property valued at \$150,000*. Our 2021 budget is projected to be \$981,600.

The Canandaigua City School District vote will take place remotely by absentee ballot. All qualified voters within the Canandaigua City School District will automatically receive the School District absentee ballot with a postage-paid envelope. Please complete your ballot and mail it as soon as you can as ballots need to be completed and returned by June 9 at 5:00pm to be counted. Wood Library's proposition will be included on that ballot as Proposition 4.

We remain dedicated and resilient and we will remain open for business. We are humbled and honored that we can continue to serve at a time when our community needs us the most. Please support us so we can continue to support you. We will get through this together.

Laurie Riedman

President, Wood Library Board of Trustees

Canandaigua resident for over 33 years