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New library doesn't disappoint

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Library Grand Opening

By LINDA HALL

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WOOSTER -- The "generous citizens of Wayne County" are prominently commended as contributors to the new downtown Wayne County Public Library in Wooster on a donor wall located just inside the south entrance.

They turned out en masse to see their library during its grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony Saturday morning.

The lined the library walkways and the city sidewalks for the official ceremony, then streamed in almost shoulder-to-shoulder to tour the building, take out books and materials, and admire the special architectural and technological features they had heard so much about.

Donor Stanley Gault called it a "spectacular facility... inside and outside, in appearance and function."

It is an "outstanding library," Gault said, competing successfully against libraries in other communities of this size.

"I hope the usage (of this library) is commensurate," he said, with the nine-year effort in making it a reality.

"It's more than a jewel; it's a whole crown of jewels," Sen. Ron Amstutz, R-Wooster, said.

Admitting he had originally questioned what a modern library should look like given the evolution of information technology, Amstutz now envisions the new library as a community center -- a place where knowledge, information and people will come together.

"It's absolutely a community asset," Greg Long said, describing the building as an "amazing, amazing thing."

The children's department was especially crowded in the early morning hours as children tried out chairs designed to fit them, picked eagerly through books displayed in face-out bins and sat quietly for a spell as their parents or grandparents chose a cozy nook for reading to them.

"It's fantastic," said Mike Saner of Wooster, accompanied by his granddaughter, 4-year-old Tristan Norris, who quickly found a copy of "My Little Pony" and added her comments about the new library.

"I like it," she pronounced.

"We're going to hear the words 'wow' and 'awesome' a lot today," predicted library Director Greg Lubelski, whose son, Will -- an aerospace engineering graduate student at the University of Buffalo -- toured the new library with him.

Will said he saw some of the plans for the building along the way and was pleased with the result. "It's beautiful," he said.

"I think it's great," said Stacy Bachman of Wooster, collecting summer reading program coupons at a busy children's department service desk with her husband and two sons.

"I think it's a great children's section, definitely a need," she said. "It's large, bright and inviting."

"I really like what they did with the carpet," said 6-year-old Alexis Fisher of Wooster, admiring the patterns and wearing her library card on a lanyard around her neck.

Priscilla Spiker of Wooster said 8-year-old Amber Fowler's and 8-year-old Joanna Spiker's eyes got "huge" when they

entered the library for the first time.

As they contentedly sat in child-sized chairs with books they had chosen, Priscilla Spiker gave her impression of the building.

"Oh, I love it," she said, adding the new children's department looks the same size as the entire first floor of the former main library on Larwill Street.

"I just called my husband and told him (the building) is wonderful," she said.

Several women enjoyed one of the reading nooks on the first floor of the new library.

"It's beautiful. I've been waiting for this a long time," said Diane Leigh Yanick of Wooster. Her favorite part of the library would be "everything," she said.

As an individual working across the street from the building, "I watched every stone being put in here with great excitement," Rella King said. "We're very, very proud of it."

King said she liked it upon "coming in the front door. Even the front (of the building) is appealing. Everything about it is appealing."

"The decorations are beautiful, the chairs, the carpet, everything," Yanick added. "They thought of everything. It's an asset to the community."

"I love it," agreed Aynie DeSouza of Wooster. "I can see myself sitting here for hours ..." she said, finishing one book and taking home others.

The world is busy outside, she said, but inside the library is "an oasis."

The teen area of the library also got a good review.

Andrea Blaine, a Wooster resident who is a freshman at Otterbein College, appreciated it is separate from the rest of the library and has a teen-appropriate book collection.

"I really like the hanging lights," her eighth-grade sister, Jetta, said.

"We like the layout," Andrea Blaine said.

Wooster High School graduate Eric Browning, who will be a freshman in the fall at Bowling Green State University, also commended the organization of the department and its modern approach.

Isobel Work, a former Sterling resident who now lives in Arizona, is back in Wooster for the summer and eager to use the genealogy department.

"It's hard to describe; it's so beautiful," Work said. "It's tremendous."

Visitors also enjoyed historical displays in the Gallery of the library and voiced an opinion about the outside of the library as well.

From across the street, the library and the Wayne Center for the Arts behind it blend architecturally, Deb Moser said.

"It spoke to the integrity of what (developers) did, taking their time and making this fit," she said. "The new library "looks as if it has been there all along."

"What an incredible day," architect Dan Meehan said. "Just the turnout shows the support the library has from the community. I was just amazed at the turnout."

"Everybody's buzzing and excited," he said, "diving in and testing things. People are coming up (to me) and saying, 'Great job.'"

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