



West Haven Public Library FY20 Annual Report

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West Haven Public Library (WHPL) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization overseen by the Village Improvement Association (VIA) board.

2020 proved to be a year filled with challenges, which West Haven Library rose to meet. We created and implemented a plan that kept the staff and patrons safe yet offered quality library services under pandemic conditions.

In response to Governor Lamont's mandate, the library closed its doors to the public on March 13 for three months. During that time, staff swiftly created new ways of serving patrons. We were heartened that participants of all ages showed their appreciation for the programs. Digital card sign ups proved to be successful, and will continue as a service into the future. Librarians answered patron questions using the chat function from within our website and social media.

We were one of the fortunate non-profits to receive a federal loan through the Paycheck Protection Act. This act granted funding to keep all staff working throughout the closure. It also enabled the library to bridge part of the gap from the \$200,000 budget cut this year. During this time staff completed work on a number of necessary projects:

- The staff painted the walls on the lower level and first level at the main library.
- Staff completed an inventory and evaluation for the entire collection.
- Professionals installed LED lighting at the main library to decrease utilities costs.
- Staff moved around the adult collection so that circulating items are easier to find for staff and patrons.

We were one of 65 libraries in the state to receive grant funding through the Governor's "Everyone Learns Initiative". This allowed us to:

- Order cleaning supplies.
- Order a professional cleaning of both library buildings.
- Purchase and install a permanent, professional looking glass barrier at all the service desks.
- Purchase and install a permanent outside awning for curbside pickup.
- Replace much of our furniture that are more efficient to clean.
- Create two private study spaces at the Main Library.

The library reduced library hours from 46 to 39 hours per week due to the cut and the pandemic conditions. Increased hours will be a priority as soon as funding allows this to happen. Staffing is 80% of the library budget and dictates the hours the library can be open. Through attrition and three retirements, our staffing numbers are low.

Despite the reduction in patron usage for FY20, the library continues to be an important community resource. It still saw more visits in FY20 at 131,798 than for all of FY17 at 129,715. Not surprisingly digital usage of materials was up 19%, which accounted for 22% of total circulation.

Taking all the necessary precautions, the library reopened to the public on July 1. It was one of only 22 libraries in Connecticut to do so. As of this writing in December, approximately 70% of the libraries in the state are currently allowing patrons in their buildings.

In September of 2020 saw the loss of the Allingtown branch. The city informed the VIA that the library was welcome to stay, but only by paying rent, which it couldn't afford. Historically, since 1977, the city agreed to allow the library to stay in the building as a nonprofit organization. The VIA lost a bid to purchase the building to another bidder, even though it was a much higher amount. Currently the VIA and the city council have been collaborating to find a new location, to better serve this vital community. Staff, and help from public works and volunteers, worked quickly to pack up the library in three short weeks. It was no easy feat to move 30,000 items in this amount of time. Currently, the furniture is being stored at the Ora Mason Library, and the collection is at the Main Library. The VIA's ultimate goal is to purchase a new library property to avoid this type of disaster in the future.

As we usher in 2021, the library continues to provide the services and materials that the West Haven community expects. We look forward to truly being open again without appointments and doing in person programming sometime in 2021!

