



Lowell Library Lines



JANUARY 2008

SOS: Say "No" to Consolidation

The fear that the Lowell Public Library and other Indiana libraries were being targeted as ripe for consolidation is now a reality. The final recommendations from the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission, formed to study, restructure and reform local government, includes the recommendation to consolidate local libraries into countywide library systems and, where prudent, to also consolidate regionally.

If our library is to thrive under local control and not be subject to mandatory county management, consolidation efforts must continue to be opposed.

Bigger is not always better when it comes to consolidating libraries. One prime example of this is when the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library remodeled and expanded their facility, that cost over \$103 million, and was \$50 million over budget. The Indianapolis-Marion County Library is the central library of a consolidated system.

The costs of consolidation in Lake County are unknown. However, it has never been proven that consolidation of libraries saves money. And, merging the various automated systems in libraries in the state would be a logistic nightmare not to mention the enormous expenses that could cost taxpayers millions of dollars as some have projected.

In regards to property taxes, consolidation of library districts does not mean residents will pay taxes to fewer taxing districts. Both now and after any consolidation, each taxpayer will pay taxes to only one library district. Right now yours is the Lowell Public Library. Under consolidation, however, local taxpayers would be helping to fund the operations of all Lake County libraries, including assuming their debts. Larger libraries tend to incur more debt through bonding and building.

Consolidation would not guarantee that existing library buildings in merged units would continue to be operated or that the un-served areas would receive library building of their own in return for the new taxes they would be required to pay. Larger units tend to build and operate larger buildings.

Libraries, in part, have been blamed for the property tax problems, yet of the taxes paid to local government, only 3.3% goes to libraries. The Lowell Library has the third lowest tax rate of the seven library districts in Lake County. If consolidated, as the Maximus Report, a study of "Operations and Efficiency Study and Taxing Jurisdiction in Lake County, Indiana," states, "tax rates may increase for some districts."

The local library community fears consolidation will result in service cuts. The Maximus Report states: "More than one-half of existing library facilities would close with the remainder reorganized/resized/rebuilt to better serve the consolidated service population."

Serious concerns exist that library districts such as ours, which have been efficient and economical in their operation, will see resources shifted or eliminated to facilitate programs in other districts of the county. There is particular concern for the continuation of our Shelby and Schneider branches. What is the value of consolidation if library facilities are centralized and are not conveniently located in the communities served?

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In their report, the Blue Ribbon Commission stated: “Many library districts, large and small, provide excellent library service. In fact, in 2004, Indiana libraries ranked second overall, and at or near the top 20 in 22 national benchmarks on services, collection, revenue and expenditures, as published by the National Center for Education Statistics.” Then why consolidate? Small libraries obviously contribute greatly to the overall high ranking. The Lowell Public Library ranked 87.3% that same year, while Indianapolis-Marion Public Library (consolidated library) ranked 85.8.%

One of the issues the Blue Ribbon Commission addressed included areas in Indiana that are un-served. However, the issue of un-served areas can only be resolved by mandating that all citizens be taxed for library service and by allowing townships to either create their own library districts, contract for service with existing districts for a negotiated price, or merge permanently with existing districts. This would allow a township to chose the best and most economical option for its citizens.

Forcing un-served areas into larger library systems would be more expensive, and in some cases, citizens would be responsible for paying off the old debt incurred by the larger unit.

The Lowell Public Library Board of Trustees have always been fiscally responsible to the taxpayers of the Tri-Creek area and they serve as unpaid volunteers of the community. Although the Lowell Library serves the entire southern third of Lake County, a population of over 17,000 people, consolidation would result in a county or regional board, elected or appointed, and most likely paid. It is unlikely that the new board would have more than one member from the Tri-Creek area. Fewer trustees would also reduce public oversight of libraries and could lead to increased corruption and mismanagement.

New, proposed certification standards for library employees recently proposed by the Indiana State Library require public libraries to employ many more trained professional librarians throughout the state, not fewer.

It is library cooperation, collaboration, and local accountability that would be best for Indiana libraries. Rather than legislation negating local taxpayer control of their tax rates through consolidation, institute legislation effecting intergovernmental cooperation. Rather than mandating to local taxpayers they want service reductions in the form of branch closures and staff reductions, let’s preserve the right of local taxpayers to effect change at the local level in the manner and fashion they choose. There are already legal mechanisms in place that would allow libraries to merge together and form larger library districts if so desired by their library boards.

The short session of the legislature will meet the first part of January. We are concerned that legislation favoring consolidation may be introduced, possibly attached to a bill on another issue, and passed without our residents having an opportunity to voice their opinions.

The library board and director want to be sure our legislators, and the Governor have heard from our patrons in Lowell, Schneider, and unincorporated Shelby and Eagle Creek, Cedar Creek, and West Creek Townships before that session.

Petitions to oppose mandatory consolidation are located in businesses and at the library. Please keep those letters and calls to your elected officials coming. Consider giving a copy of your letter to the library.

See home page for addresses.



Lowell Adult Programs

Library Quilters Meet

Each Monday, January 7, 14, 21, 28
9 AM - 12:30 PM
Bring your quilting projects.

Adult Book Group

Wednesday, January 30, 6:30 PM
Join us as we discuss the book,
The Cotton Queen by Pamela Morsi.
Refreshments will be served.

Blood Pressure/Sugar Test

Wednesday, January 16, 9 AM to 11 AM
Blood pressure and sugar (glucose)
screening are offered by Clinical Management
Services on a first come, first served basis.

Poetry Group Meets

Saturday, January 19, at 10 AM
Aspiring Poets are joining the Northwest
Indiana Poetry Society that meets at the
library on the 3rd Saturday of each month.

Talk to an Attorney Day

Monday, January 21, 9 AM to 5 PM
Attorneys will offer free legal consultations
Co-sponsored by the Indiana Bar Association
in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

January Senior Social

Thursday, January 24, at 11 AM
Senior happenings at the library are co-
sponsored by the Lowell Parks Department.
Watch the movie *Sweet Home Alabama*.
Bring a brown bag lunch. Enjoy homemade
desserts.

Winter Photography

Wednesday, January 23, at 7 PM
Linda Steinberg will discuss the camera tech-
niques for getting the best shots for outdoor
photography during the winter months.

2007 Tax Changes for Filing

Tuesday, January 29, at 7 PM
An H&R Block Tax Specialist will discuss the
new 2007 tax laws. Topics include changes to
the alternative minimum tax (AMT), mortgage
insurance premiums treated as home mort-
gage interest, Health Savings accounts
(HSAs), Social Security and Medicare taxes
and Earned Income Amount for Additional
Child Tax credit.

Computer Classes

Learn word processing and how to surf the
net. Computer Basics will be offered on
Mondays; Internet Basics on Wednesdays,
and Word or Excel on alternate Fridays.

All classes will be held at 11 AM. Evening
classes are held each Tuesday, at 6 PM.
Please pre-register at the circulation desk.

At the Shelby Branch

Adult Book Discussion

Friday, January 11
Meet with others to discuss
A Christmas Secret, by Anne Perry.
Enjoy a homemade dessert and coffee.

Blood Pressure

Monday, January 14, 10:30 - 12 PM
First come/first served basis.

Adult Craft

Monday, January 21, at 5 PM
Bring your craft projects and work with
other crafters.

National Blonde Brownie Day

Tuesday, January 22
Come in and enjoy our company and a
delicious home-baked brownie!

Bingo

Monday, January 28, at 5 PM
Play Bingo for novelty prizes.

Adult Scrapbooking

Tuesday, January 29, at 4:30 PM
Bring your scrapbooking projects and
learn new ways to enhance your scrap-
books. Cost \$3.00

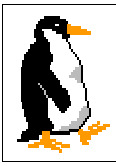
At the Schneider Branch

Adult Cards and Craft Discussion

Monday, January 7, at 3 PM and
Monday, January 21 at 3 PM.

Adult Scrapbooking

Saturday, January 12, at 10 AM
All day scrapbooking with Adults & YAS.



YA Programming - Lowell

- Thursday, January 3, Game Night 6 PM - 7:30 PM
- Saturday, January 5, YA Craft 1 PM - 3:30 PM
- Thursday, January 10, Game Night 6 PM - 7:30 PM
- Thursday, January 17, Game Night 6 PM - 7:30 PM
- Saturday, January 19, YA Craft 1 PM - 3:30 PM
- Thursday, January 24, Game Night 6 PM - 7:30 PM
- Thursday, January 31, Game Night 6 PM - 7:30 PM

BOOK DISCUSSION FOR HIGH SCHOOL AGE GIRLS ONLY

Pick up your copy of “*Cures for Heartbreak*” by Margo Rabb. Time and date to be announced. See Debbie at the library for details.



Branch Programs for Children / YAs

Schneider Kids

- Thursday, January 10 at 3:30 PM
“Children, Cookies, and Books” Day
- Kids Movie Day- Tuesday, January 15
at 3:45 PM - *Charlotte’s Web*
- Thursday, January 24 at 3:30 PM
Kids Craft- Make picture frames.
- Join Miss Sandy on Tuesday, January 29,
at 4 PM, and make Crunchy the Snowman.
From pretzels, chocolate and other goodies!
Please pre-register.
- Thursday January 31, at 3:30 PM
Kids Game Day

YA Programs

- Wednesday, January 16, 4:30 PM - 7 PM
Snow Craft
- Wednesday, January 23 -
Play Bunco with other YAs at 4:30 PM.
Have snacks.

Schneider Branch Library - 552-1000

Shelby Branch Library - 552-0809

Shelby Kids

- Thursday, January 3
Come see the movie, *Underdog* at 3 PM
- Story Time with Miss Bethany is held
every Monday at 10:30 AM. This six-week
program begins January 7.
- Make Crunchy the Snowman with Miss
Sandy on Thursday, January 31, and 4 PM.
“Crunchy” is made with pretzels, melted
chocolate, and other goodies!

YA Programs

- Wednesday, January 2
Chats and Chewies, 5 PM - 7 PM
- Tuesday, January 8, Food, Fun & Fiction
Club meets at 5:30 PM Read *Dairy Queen*
by Catherine Gilbert Murdock and enjoy a
book discussion over snacks.
- Tuesday, January 15, 4:30 PM-7:00 PM
Snow Craft
- Tuesday, January 22, 4:30 PM - Come and
watch a movie and have a PB & J sandwich
& a pop for 25¢.



JUST FOR KIDS



Story Time

Story Time is a six week program for 4 and 5 years olds. Parents must stay in the library during the program, however, not in the program room. There is no charge for Story Time. Each session last approximately 30-45 minutes. Space is limited. Pre-register for either Tuesdays at 10 AM (January 8-February 12) or Wednesdays at 10 AM (January 9-February 13).

January Craft Corner

Come join the fun! You will be decorating your own snowman treasure container. Preschoolers through 5th graders are welcome. (Preschoolers must be accompanied by an adult). Please pre-register for either the 10 AM or 3 PM session that will be held on Thursday, January 10.

Winter Bingo for Books and Bears

Come to the library on Thursday, January 17th and play color shape bingo for books and bears! Win a bear you can read your books to! Preschoolers through 5th grade are welcome to participate. Preschoolers must be accompanied by an adult. There are two sessions, 10 AM and 3 PM. Please pre-register.