

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



GARFIELD COUNTY
LIBRARIES

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As executive director, I focused on community outreach and engagement in 2019. I launched a “Coffee with the Library Director” series that brought me to one of our local libraries each month. During these community conversations, I shared what I was working on, but more importantly, I heard directly from county residents and learned what they loved about their libraries and heard what they wanted to see improved. Additionally, library staff engaged with our residents through a telephone survey, a mailer with a survey, and through public speaking engagements with community members. Library staff and Trustees spoke at schools, service clubs, senior centers, city councils, and many other groups throughout the year.

Through this community engagement work, we learned that residents wanted library hours restored. They also clearly stated that they wanted us to retain our talented staff and avoid future layoffs. They wanted to see more books on the shelves and for us to maintain our library buildings that host important community meetings throughout the county. They wanted more educational classes and events as well as investments in public computers and internet access so that they could use these tools to stay informed and connected to a world of information.

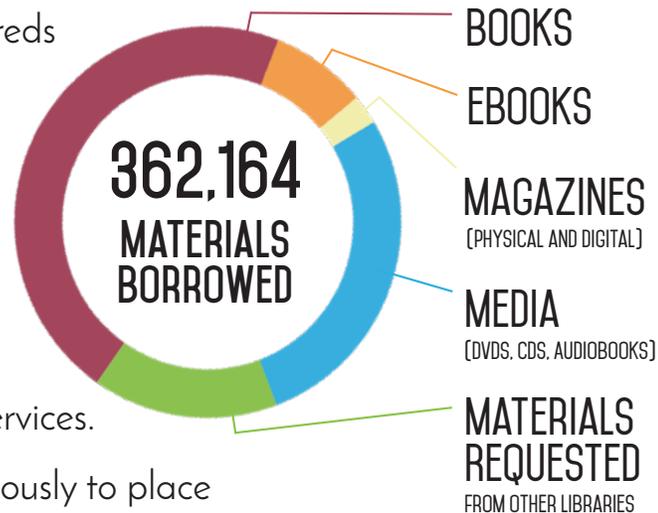
Yet Garfield County Libraries entered the year facing significant funding shortfalls. Our 2019 annual budget was \$1.9 million less than a decade ago. Meanwhile, our residents continued to

love and heavily use their local libraries, reading hundreds of thousands of books each year and visiting their libraries nearly 400,000 times annually. Through a public survey, 83% of our residents told us that someone in their household had visited one of our libraries in the past year. The majority of those who responded to our survey also indicated that they would be willing to support additional public funding in order to restore library hours and maintain library services.

In August, the Library Board of Trustees voted unanimously to place a 1.5 mill levy increase on the ballot. We are thankful that our county's voters said "yes" in November to providing stable funding to our local libraries.

Now the exciting work really begins! Even before the additional revenue began to arrive, library staff began ordering more books and materials as a "thank you" to our voters as 2019 ended.

Looking ahead, library hours will be restored in 2020 just as quickly as we can hire and train our new library staff. We'll add more books to our collection, and we'll be able to offer some services for the first time, such as streaming movies through our website. So, be on the lookout for an array of new items and services in the coming year!

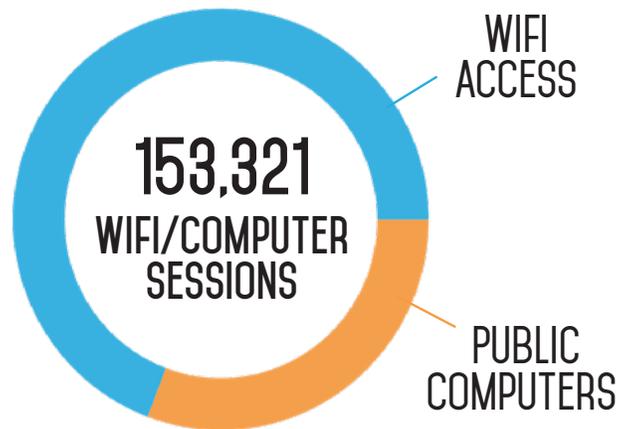


-Brett Lear, Executive Director

FOCUS ON COMMUNITY HEALTH

We identified an emphasis on health and wellness as a key way we could accomplish our strategic priorities for our community. We utilized grants from Garfield Healthy Communities Coalition and the Public Library Association to create online assets and the “360 Health” event series to help connect our communities to health information and resources.

Our libraries also undertook an initiative to train staff on various food and health resources within the county so they could better connect library visitors to these providers. By working to lessen disparities such as hunger and health care coverage in our area, our libraries have deepened our relationship with community members and vital community organizations alike.



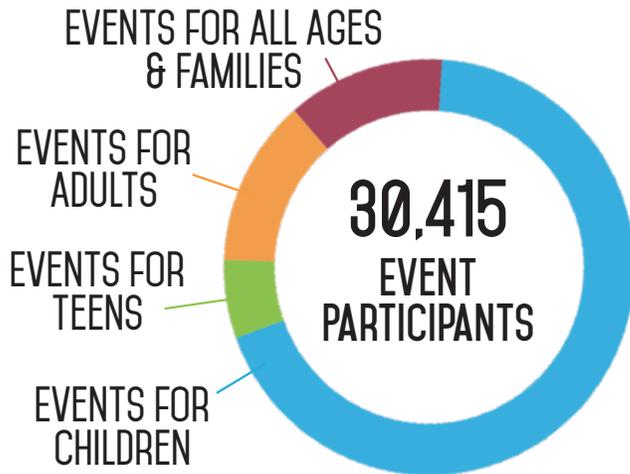


Children work on their reading skills as part of the PAWS to READ program.

GRANT FUNDING BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES

Several grant initiatives secured key additional funding for our libraries in 2019. A grant award was received from the Garfield County Federal Mineral Lease District in the fall to purchase 26 public computers. These new machines replaced computers that were up to 10 years old.

A Growing Readers Together grant from the Colorado State Library allowed our libraries to focus on helping family, friends, and neighbor caregivers incorporate early literacy into childcare as well as get them the tools necessary to make sure the children in their care are ready to begin school.



We utilized a mini-grant from REFORMA to host the first “Noche de Cuentos” event in partnership with Visión Latina. This Spanish language celebration brought community members and storytellers into the library for a superb night of storytelling.

Additionally, we secured a Public Library Association grant to bring a national exhibit “Thinking Money for Kids” to our libraries from the American Library Association and the FINRA Investor Education Foundation.

noche de cuentos



Storytellers from the community lead the first "Noche de Cuentos" event.

SURVEY GIVES IMPORTANT INSIGHT

The libraries reached out to the community in the first half of 2019 to determine what was most important for the future. We conducted a phone survey, paper/online survey, and staff as well as members of our Board of Trustees met with various community leaders. Valuable information was gained from these conversations and data including:

83%

**SAID SOMEONE IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD HAD VISITED A
GARFIELD COUNTY LIBRARY IN THE LAST YEAR**

80%

SAID IT WAS A HIGH PRIORITY TO RETAIN QUALIFIED LIBRARY STAFF

79%

**SAID IT WAS A HIGH PRIORITY TO RESTORE HOURS TO PROVIDE SAFE SPACES
FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS AFTER SCHOOL, ON WEEKENDS, AND DURING SUMMER**

This information helped the libraries determine it was important to have a measure placed on the November 2019 ballot to seek additional funding that would be needed to accomplish the goals of which a large majority of respondents said were a high priority.

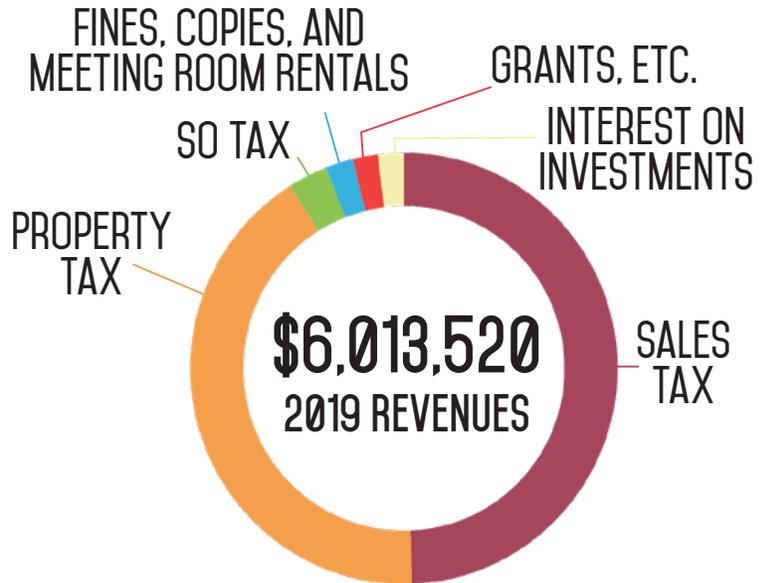


Community members gather to drink coffee and talk about the library's future.

VOTERS RESTORE HEALTHY FUNDING LEVELS

The Library's strategic plan calls on staff and library trustees to ensure the long-term stability of our library district. After years of steadily declining revenues and most recently, a \$1.2 million decrease in property tax revenue in 2017, most of the Library's core services had been painfully cut. Many county residents regularly expressed the need for the restoration of these core library services. In 2019, the Board of Trustees and staff engaged the public around library priorities and placed a ballot measure in front of the voters in November 2019.

The voters of Garfield County approved the 2019 ballot initiative 6A. The resulting 1.5 mill levy increase will allow the library to retain qualified staff, maintain access to educational classes and events for children, provide classes and events for seniors, keep library buildings safe and well-maintained, purchase more books, restore hours, and improve technology.





Children are delighted by special performances during Summer Reading.

THANK YOU 2019 DONORS AND GRANTORS



Children find the perfect spot on the floor to enjoy a story with a librarian.

Katie Bannon • James Bell • Roberta Boyer •
J Thomas & Linda Clark • Lulu Colby • Colorado State
Library • Norma Davenport • Jean & Michael Delaney
Richard Dewyne • Greg & Kathy Feinsinger •
Betty Geib • Garfield County Federal Mineral Lease
District • Garfield County Libraries Foundation •
Garfield Healthy Communities Coalition • Grand Valley
Kiwanis Foundation • Amy Jackson • Kathleen Jaycox •
Nancy Kahn • Jon Leitzinger • Kathleen Molitor •
Ann & David Nicholson • Patricia Peterson • Public
Library Association • REFORMA • Hector Resendiz •
Ross Stores Foundation • Donald & Maren Schuster •
Angela Strode • Marie Stroshine • Jed Woolley

Find Your
STORY

