

Library lives despite cuts

Amanda Boyle
Staff Reporter

Glenda Davis Hunt, Adair County library director, fears the library soon might be forced to cut its spending.

With an expected 80 percent increase in utility bills this winter, she said she thinks the money will have to come from the book budget.

The Adair County Library is funded primarily by a levy to property taxes throughout the county, she said. The library receives 15 cents per every \$100 worth of property evaluations.

Rita Henderson, president of the library's board of trustees, said that in February 2001, the board requested an increase in the tax levy through the Adair County ballot. However, the issue failed to pass, and faced with a lack of funds, the library made a primary round of budget cuts.

Davis Hunt said that beginning in March 2001, the library decreased its hours by closing Saturday mornings and on Mondays. Because it already was closed on Sundays, closing

on Mondays enabled it to keep the utilities turned down from Saturday afternoon until Tuesday morning, saving money on the utilities bill. She also said that after the levy did not pass, the library had to cut two positions from its staff, and now only employs the equivalent of 7.8 full-time employees.

Henderson speculated the levy increase did not pass because it was presented on the February ballot while utility bills were sky-rocketing for winter. She said the board of trustees also agreed to place the levy increase on the ballot as the only issue. The plan did not work in part because of the high utility bills and being the only issue on the ballot, she said.

"[Truman volunteers] are hardworking, young, can bend and stoop, and they learn any task quickly."

Glenda Davis Hunt
Adair County Library Director

"I wish I had the answer," Davis Hunt said. "We are living in Missouri where people don't want high taxes. They don't want additional taxes."

Davis Hunt said state funding cuts from 55 cents per capita to 41 cents per capita only enhanced the budget issues.

"We've tightened our belts," Henderson said.

"And we keep on tightening our belts."

Henderson explained that in the future the library might request an increase in the levy again, but she is not sure when that will happen. She said as long as the library can continue functioning as is, it will wait.

"We are trying at our very best to utilize all of the funds that we are responsible with, to be good stewards of the money that the citizens have to pay in their taxes," she said. "We don't want to have to ask for an increase until we absolutely have to."

Davis Hunt said that after the first round of budget cuts in operating hours and staff, the library hired a consultant using grant money to help them figure out where they could cut corners. Unfortunately, she said, the consultant was unable to save the library any money. She said the consultant told the library they are operating under the minimum number of staff members of any public library in the state.

In efforts to provide some relief to the library staff, numerous Truman students, KCOM students and community members volunteer at the library. In addition, Truman students can complete their scholarship hours at the library.

In 2004, 256 volunteers contributed 5,961 hours to the



Kirkville resident Cindy Cordray searches the book racks at the Adair County Library on Monday afternoon.

library, which would have cost \$30,700 if paid at minimum wage, according to the library's annual report.

"We're just delighted we have those students," Davis Hunt said. "[Truman volunteers] are hardworking, young, can bend and stoop, and they learn any task quickly."

She said the library has to report volunteer hours to the state every year because without proof, the state might have trouble believing the library is running on such a small staff.

Junior Danielle Asal volunteers at the library for service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega and said she chose to volunteer there for two reasons.

"I decided to volunteer at

the library because the hours worked the best for me, so that was the main reason," she said. "The second reason was that once I went there for the first time, I saw how much they needed the help as far as reorganizing the books and dusting the books. I know [the staff] really appreciates it and can really use the volunteer help."

Henderson and Davis Hunt both said that regardless of funding problems, the library is an asset to the community.

Davis Hunt said that although community members are allowed to use Pickler Memorial Library, finding parking at and walking to the library from the lots can prove to be a hassle. She also

said Pickler, an academic library, can be intimidating to a community member wanting to use the library for recreational use or for learning about new things. She said the public library might suit those needs better.

The Adair County Library offers a variety of services to the community, such as a summer reading program for children in which 822 participated in summer 2004.

If the utility bills do increase this winter, the library will have to cut from its book budget, Davis Hunt said. She compared this to having to cut back at home when facing a budget problem. She said people would cut back on gro-

ceries and similarly, books are the basic item to cut back on at the library.

She said the book budget for 2006 is \$60,000. However, she said this year the library was able to spend more as a result of the fund-raising program, Adair to Dream. She said Adair to Dream raised \$20,000 dollars for books in the children's department. She said the library still welcomes any donations.

Despite future possible budget problems, Davis Hunt said the library is not on its way to closure.

"The library will be here," she said. "It is not going anywhere."

Local park repairs damage suffered from water erosion

Krystal Miller
for the Index

Preventing erosion at Forest Lake in Thousand Hills State Park begins with a little bit of rock.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced in early October that it would use a portion of the parks and soil sales tax to stop the erosion of Forest Lake's shoreline. The erosion project has been underway

for the past month, and the crew has little left to do to finish the job.

Brent Steacy, Thousand Hills State Park superintendent, said he is surprised with how fast the project is moving. The construction crew already has finished placing rocks along the shore line, but he said they have to fill in some of the gaps with rocks and replace the dirt and grass that were torn up from the heavy equipment.

By the time the project is

finished, Steacy said he estimates it will cost a little less than \$300,000.

But Steacy said the project is well worth the cost.

"We want to preserve that waterfront recreation area that's been here for over 50 years," Steacy said. "Most people know of the Point. Well, it's slowly becoming a stub from the erosion. We don't want to have to rename it."

The Point is a popular shelter located near the ma-

rina. Steacy said this is one of the many areas affected by the erosion.

"Last April we lost part of our road," Steacy said. "We had two shelters that were starting to lean, wanting to go right into the lake, and we lost one parking lot."

Steacy said his main concern was that the recreational areas would not be able to be used in the future if this erosion project did not happen. In the summer winds cause

waves to break away at the clay-soil shore. He said putting rock there will stop that from happening.

Although the crew has not come across many problems during the project, Steacy said he has had some complaints. Some people think the site is unattractive while others worry the deer will not be able to get to the shore to drink water, Steacy said. But he said there are 17 miles of shoreline unaffected

by the project that are easily accessible to the deer.

Sue Holst, division information officer for DNR's Division of State Parks, said the project requires about 10,000 tons of rock. She said the project is scheduled to be finished Dec. 1.

Forest Lake is a source for the public water supply in Kirkville. John Buckwalter, director of the Public Works Department in Kirkville, said the erosion project will,

if anything, have a positive effect on the water supply.

"The only thing it might do to the water supply is help it by reducing sedimentation left behind in the water," Buckwalter said. "But the volume of the lake is so huge that I really don't think it will make a drastic change."

Buckwalter said it also might make the water easier to treat at the water plant, but overall it will affect the water supply very minimally.

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