

O'Fallon Public Library wins Beautification Award

HIGHLIGHTS

Library renovations cost \$800,000, saved over 10-year period

Open house event at library April 17 at 2 p.m. at 120 Civic Plaza

Make-over allows for intuitive navigation by patrons



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In with the new and out with the old.

If any building in O'Fallon needed a facelift and internal cleanse — it was the 22-year-old O'Fallon Public Library, Molly Scanlan, library director, said.

“We’ve been waiting for this for a long time, and are through the roof about the remodel,” Scanlan said. “This was more than just paint, new flooring or equipment. We literally replaced tons, moved main services and reworked the limited space of just under 17,000 square feet to help serve the growing number of O'Fallon residents,” Scanlan said.

So after many years of waiting and planning, and less than a year of renovations and remodeling, the O'Fallon Public Library is finally finished getting it's 'long-needed' make-over, according to Scanlan.

With a price tag of about \$800,000, Scanlan said residents can rest easy knowing that property tax funding for the library has not increased in the past four years, she said.

“Over the past 10 years, the library board of trustees has been saving money to pay for this renovation project so taxes won't increase for the residents,” she said.

The library is the recipient of the Business Beautification Award from the O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce as a part of the annual 2016 business awards.

“This recognition is wonderful, and it really speaks volumes to the city, the board of trustees and myself of the recognized appreciation for the recent remodeling,” Scanlan said

O’Fallon Public Library has an open house slated for 1-5 p.m., Sunday (April 17) at the O’Fallon Public Library located at 120 Civic Plaza, off Lincoln Avenue, to celebrate the completion of the building’s ‘long-needed’ renovation and remodeling. The dedication begins at 2 p.m. in the first floor large meeting room, according to Scanlan.

“I encourage everyone to attend the open house and check out the new look of the O’Fallon Public Library,” Mayor Gary Graham said. “The years of planning, and seven months of construction were well worth it.”

Tours and light refreshments will be provided.

Community Development Director Ted Shekell was recently given a tour.

“This is great, I’m just amazed really,” Shekell said. “I had an idea of the plans before, but actually seeing it with your own eyes is a whole other ballgame.”

With services ranging from career guidance, free tax and election center, computer and research assistance to teen and children’s areas for age-specific activities and studying, the library should be a must-visit destination in O’Fallon for local residents, Scanlan said.

“Sometimes people are intimidated by libraries because there’s so many options and places to explore,” Scanlan said. “So we hear newcomers often say things like, ‘where do I go? How do I do this?’”

For that very reason, Scanlan, along with the Library Board members, had a vision to remodel the interior of the circa 1994 building to be more aesthetically pleasing and fun, but mostly navigationally intuitive to patrons, she said.

“It’ll be easier for people to use the library. Although we didn’t add more space, we definitely made better use of the space we had,” Scanlan said.

Moving the help and circulation desks from its former centralized location, Scanlan explained her reasoning for having it closer to the entrance.

“That’s why we positioned the help desk to be right there as soon as you walk in,” Scanlan said. “We tried to label everything so people can find things better, and aren’t left wondering where workers or certain items are. This way, they can walk in and have someone there to greet them and help if they need it, cause I just hate it when I walk in to a place and there’s no body there so you just wander aimlessly.”

Another vital change, allowing for a more natural flow of the space, Scanlan pointed out the adult services department and computers were all moved downstairs.

One of the many unique additions is the new bubble wall partition separating a small space labeled for magazines with shelving offering many different titles.

“Kids love our new bubble wall near our entrance, it’s fun to watch while a parent or a sibling are checking out or perusing materials,” Scanlan said. “It’s almost floor to ceiling and is lit up and turns colors.”

The library has many activities and clubs, some seasonal like yoga, some not, that people can join and meet monthly like, board game night in the teen room, the Legos Club, Chess Club, Books ‘n Brew, Anime Club, Teen Book Clubs and many more. Family movie days are held monthly.

With over 400,000 books and other materials, 6,000 DVDs and Blu Ray DVDs are available for checkout, including popular movies, TV series’ for all ages, as well as educational and musical content.

The list doesn’t end there, Scanlan said if a resident has his or her library card number and pin, he or she could download magazines and music using Zinio and Freegal programs; plus, ebooks and audio books 24/7 are available too.

“We have self checkout stations now too, so people don’t have to wait in line necessarily,” Scanlan said.

Covering an array of subjects, 32 online databases are accessible both from the library and from your home or work computer, which Scanlan noted is quite handy, especially for students.

“The remodel also helps provide for a quiet area on the mezzanine level by enclosing that space too, before it was an open railing with no glass for sound control and it was like an echo chamber,” Scanlan said.

Sticklers for silence needn’t worry, there’s a new ‘Quiet Room’ on the second floor against the back wall equipped with comfortable seating and a door, where people can take advantage of the thousands of books or even the Nooks, digital e-reader tablet, and laptops available that come preloaded with oodles of content, Scanlan said.

“Some people just don’t like noise, and so this can be a sanctuary for them as it’s a no conversation zone for those who like quiet while working on their laptops, studying or reading a book. It is not meant for cell phone use or group study,” she said.

As the 26 wood clad windows began rotting, heating and cooling air systems began to fail too, and more electrical outlets were needed to keep up with technology, as well as the carpet had become threadbare, she said.

All were replaced as staff took a proactive approach to keeping the building in sound shape to last another decade or longer.

“Updating equipment and furniture was part of bringing a more refreshing ambiance,” Scanlan said. “We also added a media area with a flat screen television, and a vending island nearby with food and drinks — yes, you can drink in the library!”

Minimizing the staff footprint, Scanlan said her and the staff were more than willing to selflessly reduce the size of the staff workroom and offices to allow for more patron space.

“We have a building here that is too small to serve the growing number of residents with over 160,000 visitors a year,” Scanlan said.

The Youth Room, Kid’s Place and conference rooms are equipped with new large dry erase technology boards that can be used with idea paint markers that wipe off easily for anyone to use while studying or using the space, and they can be used as projectors for movies and other instructional videos.

“We talked to the youth that frequent the library, and the majority did not want the word ‘teen’ in it, so we have a frosted glass name on the glass wall that says ‘@ the Hub,’” Scanlan said. “We tried to plan for certain areas to be for quiet use and then other areas for activities, which has become the trend nowadays with libraries.”

The Kid’s Place activity room has had hygienic and anti-static marmoleum flooring installed, which is great for the kids, especially those who are sensitive to air contaminants.

“It’s an all green material that is anti-microbial that doesn’t emit any kinds of VCT odors, or anything like that. It’s the only kind of flooring that is certified by Asthma Society not to cause asthma or stir up allergies for the kids which is great,” Scanlan said excitedly. “And it’s a little softer than regular flooring.”

Two fenced-in small areas were added outside with doors leading outside from two parts of the first floor. One is for adults and one is for children to enjoy the nice weather while relaxing with a book, Scanlan said.

“The one for kids has a life-size chess board on the ground, so when the weather allows we will put the large chess pieces out there for them to utilize, and there’s a chalkboard provided too,” Scanlan said. “We have furniture and plants to go in both areas too.”

Korte Luitjohan Contractors Inc. in Highland was the main contractor.

For more information, please contact the O’Fallon Public Library at 632-3783 or visit the library website.

REMODEL INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING REPAIRS, UPDATES AND ADDITIONS:

- All built in desks removed and replaced with smaller mobile units for easy reconfiguration
- All major services located on the main floor
- The entrance is elongated to prevent both doors being open at the same time
- Circulation area will be moved to the entrance of the library and current self-checkout machines updated, with two additions having optical scanners to read library card numbers stored on cell phones
- Children’s are separated with half-walls and acoustical ‘trees’ for noise control
- Children’s program room moved to the area where picture books were
- A glass walled magazine room featuring a bubble wall where the old circulation desk was
- Two small study rooms added near bubble wall
- The middle of the library now features a ‘market place’ with all DVD’s located on a curved wall separating the area from the children’s department with comfortable seating arranged around a vending machine area and all new adult materials will be shelved in this area, as well as large print books
- Old conference room and director’s office converted into a glass walled young adult ‘teen’ room
- Computer services will be located in the area where adult fiction once was
- All shelving on the lower level is low for good sight control of the building
- Three main offices for the adult services manager, circulation manager and bookkeeper added
- A print station near the staircase houses the public copier and print kiosk
- The first floor will have two fenced in outdoor reading areas — one for adults and one for children
- A glassed in quiet room, a small conference room and a help desk added
- A drive-up book drop installed on the far island near the entrance of the parking lot
- Two fenced in outdoor areas for kids and adults

