

Round Valley Public Library

Where do we begin our heart-lifting story? We have lived for decades searching for hope. We have no local government beyond that of the Tribal Council for the reservation. Our civic organizations have been in decline with ever-dwindling memberships and lack of focus. We have a litany of visionary projects begun, only to be aborted in ennui. Initially, a great many of our citizens chalked up the idea of a new library to being one more project destined for failure. Depressing?

Yes! But then the zeal of the core group of five Friends caught and spread like wildfire. Soon the core became twenty and continued to grow to the current four hundred fifty donors, with more than sixty-five hundred hours of volunteer time. People who had never participated in community activities became enlisted, and the doubting Thomases soon became staunch supporters. I encourage you to read the testimonials included in this nomination.

The decision to buy the old, dilapidated Round Valley Inn was predicated in part upon its history as a place in which all people were welcome and for its location in the heart of town at the center of the valley.

Beyond the basic need to house our book collection, we felt a strong responsibility to create a warm, homey atmosphere. Many of our citizens live in crowded and forlorn environments. For some the library is a chance to be warm in winter, for others it is a safe haven. It has the only public restrooms in town. We outfitted our reading sections with durable, comfortable leather furniture. Citizens stepped forward to design everything from the reference tables to the tiles in the bathroom. Our citizens own our library.

Our Library Commons is host to many programs underscoring current and ongoing library programs. One such example is the Sustainability Movie Night, held once a month. The sponsors use all proceeds to donate books to our library, books calculated to be of great interest to our local farmers, ranchers, and home gardeners.

A dedicated member of both the Sustainability Group and the Friends has single-handedly launched an ambitious seed exchange library. Books in the sustainability library teach seed-harvesting skills, and coupled with the heirloom seeds we provide, allow for a greater range of produce to be sold at the Farmers Market held among the over-arching walnut trees in the commons garden--the only public park in town. Armed with healthy organic produce, people may make use of the books on canning and food preservation as well as use our commercial kitchen to put up nutritious food for the winter, a good way for cash-strapped families to feed their children well, or to offer the preserves for sale through the coffee shop in the Community Room Lobby.

While the majority of our funds have come through grants, we have always felt it imperative that our community own the library, that people here are able to find traces of themselves, family, and other community members throughout. Thus, the importance of local donations of time and/or money. We also generate reliable income from retail space and from the rent for the Community Room (on a sliding-scale basis). With ownership in mind, we have hosted a great many fundraisers that may not have actually raised a significant amount of money for the project, but through participation have reinforced each individual's ownership and kinship in the commons.

Our library staff actively seeks to help our visitors reach far beyond our print options as we constantly seek to dovetail all experiences offered, allowing patrons to stumble upon meaningful experiences in much the same way one used to browse the library and allow serendipity to dictate the next read.

Our computers are in constant use, so much so that we have had to limit use to one hour per day per patron. However, we also offer high-speed WiFi to all, with unlimited access free of charge, 24/7. Many patrons choose to access it in our comfortable Community Room Lobby, or while enjoying a cup of tea in our spacious covered patio garden, or while snuggled in the comfort of leather armchairs in our reading room, or in the privacy of their own cars. So much of our rural population is simply off the grid; this is the only access for them to the outside world. For students writing papers or people needing longer screen time, they have the option of signing up for computer use in our Media Room, which gives them privacy and access to online legal help and counseling services, as well as online classes.

Nestled as we are in the Yolla Bolly wilderness, with a population sparsely spread out, communication can often be difficult. Two years ago, we had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to set up our own radio station. The Friends quickly realized what a valuable role the station could play in our library and our community. The

Radio Committee was formed as a subcommittee of the Friends. With an all-volunteer staff (the Friends own the FCC license), we broadcast twenty-four hours a day. We offer locally produced public affairs, news, interviews, and entertainment programming, as well as rebroadcasts of nationally syndicated Native American news and cultural information. One of our chief resources and technicians teaches regular classes on how to create your own radio program. As a result, we currently broadcast eighteen locally produced shows. Our librarian hosts an hour of children's songs and stories on air, and recently we became capable of hosting live call-in programming as well. This treasure allows us to reach nearly every home in the valley, no matter where you live or who you are. It allows for desperately needed, up-to-the-minute news on local forest fires and calamities, as well as live broadcasting of local events and festivities for those housebound. All this, while offering everyone in the community the opportunity to become familiar with the technical equipment and discipline involved in a top-notch setting. The Radio Committee, with its emphasis on local participation and positive programming, has enticed into its fold a great many younger people not in the habit of volunteering or crossing racial and territorial boundaries. Once the strangeness of other has been removed, we are finding that these same individuals are crossing over into other groups, revitalizing many of our sister community organizations with their youth and vitality, passing on the skills they have gained.

The library plays a crucial role in supporting local organizations and they in turn give back to the library and to the community. On a separate sheet you'll find a list of the full range of those who have become dependent on our support.

What more can we say? Our library has become the heart and soul of our community, and we own it!

Georgina Wright-Pete (librarian for our old facility) and Rachel Borum (our new librarian)

