

Barbara Ball, Director

Windsor Public Library

March 14, 2023

Hello Working Group,

The week before Christmas in 2022, Windsor had a bad ice storm. Many Windsor residents found themselves without power. It took 3 days for many to get their power back. When I arrived at the library one morning during this time, the space was full of residents charging their devices, checking their emails, and one person was even filling up water jugs in the library's bathroom to tide themselves over.

Likewise, we are on the state list of heating and cooling centers and -- during the summer -- many residents have benefited from our air conditioning.

I had a few more thoughts on social services in libraries. I feel like, as a public library, we are like Swiss Army Knives that include some unexpected blades. Social Services? We help patrons connect with services they may need. We have helped folks determine if they're eligible for 3-Square VT and helped them apply. We have helped folks with finding transportation, food, and a warming shelter. In the summer, we have a table outside with excess vegetables on it for the taking. These are from our own backyard children's program garden as well as from the Windsor Community Gardens. Our children's librarian and I are adept at setting boundaries and using de-escalation techniques when needed with patrons that may have mental health concerns. I have a history of previously working over 10 years in the mental health field -- I was a licensed social worker (LSW) in Massachusetts-- and find this background very applicable now in my work as a librarian.

Before I returned to the Windsor Public Library in February of 2020 (I was director here from 2012-2014 as well), the library had been heavily involved in supporting a local family that was involved with the Department of Children and Families: a single parent with 5 children. The children would all come to the library every day after school and take over the computer stations playing games (often to the unhappiness of adult patrons needing computers.) The library started offering these kids snacks after school because they were often hungry. However, this led to abandoned half-eaten snacks being left in unexpected places (the library stacks, the stowaway cupboard, etc.,) which then led to mice in the library. When this family was at the library daily, we would regularly find the paper towels in our bathroom had disappeared. For a while, the librarian-at-the-time's solution was to have a sign in the bathroom apologizing for the lack of towels and explaining the situation. The pandemic brought an end to this family coming in and we did end up changing our computer policy to limit the time someone spent on it to only half an hour. So, that family is certainly welcome to come in the library but -- with the time limit set on computer use -- they are choosing not to.

Last year, we were asked by the Windsor Food Pantry if we could be the distribution site for the summer free lunch program for kids. Unfortunately, we were not able to do this due to our library's small size and lack of space for the meals.

Finally, while we have been lucky in not finding used needles in our bathroom, etc., (as did happen when I was a board member at the Springfield Town Library 5 years ago,) I would love for our library to be able to have Narcan in case a patron needs it. We live in a society right now where opioid abuse is prevalent, and Narcan is a critical tool. I love it that the Vermont Department of Libraries was encouraging libraries to do this a few years ago. However, when I let our insurance company know we were going to do this, their response was, "If you have Narcan there, we will need to cancel your insurance policy. You are a

library not a hospital." We have an AED here and staff have been trained in CPR. Why is this any different?

Thanks so much again for all your work,
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