

CULTURE AND LEISURE

REPORT OF THE WESTON CULTURAL COUNCIL

The Weston Cultural Council is charged with distributing money allotted to the Town by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency supporting the Arts, Humanities and Sciences. Weston's allocation for 2005 was \$2000, but was increased to \$2500 for 2006.

Grants are made to individuals or groups to support worthy projects that enhance the cultural side of our lives and enhance our appreciation of our cultural environment. Grants are also available to educational institutions (the PASS grant program) for such activities as field trips to concerts, museums, etc.

Applications for LCC (Local Cultural Council) grants were due at the Town Hall on Oct. 17, 2005. A public meeting of the Weston Cultural Council was held on Oct. 24, 2005 at which time the submissions were discussed and the grants were awarded. The Council received 20 applications requesting a total of \$8,450. Seven grants were fully funded for a total of \$2,495.

All of the grants are subject to approval by the MCC. Funds are then released to the Town and artists are paid following the completion of their project or performance. Grant recipients are required to publicize their events, which are generally open to the public, and interested residents are urged to take advantage of these cultural opportunities.

The following is a list of the grants approved at the local level in the fall of 2005 which will be funded in 2006:

- * **Golden Tones-- "Singing Through Our Lives" Music Program:** three performances for seniors and their families in Weston:
 - Epoch Senior Health Center on 11/10/05
 - Weston Senior Club at the Weston Community Center 2/11/06
 - Sunrise Assisted Living of Weston 2/17/06
- * **Rivers Music School – Seminar on Contemporary Music for the Young**
- * Partial funding for commissioning composer Lowell Liebermann;
- * Series of concerts March 31-April 2, 2006 at the Rivers Music School
- * **DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park – Art in the Park** (June 11, 2006 10 AM--5 PM) –partial funding for art supplies and performers' fees; target audience is residents interested in contemporary art and artists.
- * **Boston City Band** will perform a 2 hour concert on the Town Green this summer, sponsored by the Recreation Department.
- * **Three Apples Storytelling Festival** (Sept. 30 – Oct. 1, 2006 in Bedford) Festival preview will take place at the Weston Public Library in Sept., 2006, featuring 2 storytellers for the community's enjoyment.
- * **Henry Lappen** – Juggling performance and workshop, for children and families
- * **Jim Douglas** – will update the New England School Performing Artist Directory (NESPAD) (<http://www.nichols.edu/nespad/nespad.htm>)

The Weston Cultural Council is currently composed of five residents (5-10 allowed) who have been appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Tenure is limited by statute to two three-year terms. Interested residents are invited to contact the Selectmen. This council would welcome additional members. For further information, please contact Lynn Taff (Chair), Lynne Weber, Beth Schlager, Meredith Eppel or Alison Braunstein.

REPORT OF THE WESTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The mission of the Weston Public Library is to provide materials, resources and programs for lifelong learning and enjoyment. The Library serves the entire community by making available collections on a broad array of subjects of interest to its patrons. It is a forum for the community, providing a welcoming and well-maintained facility for meetings, informal gatherings, lectures and other cultural events.

This past year was a very busy one for the library. Thanks to the support of Weston residents, we have begun planning to repair our roof, which should commence in the spring of 2006. This will allow us to preserve our valuable collection of materials, and to maintain our beautiful building. The first town wide reading program, Weston Reads... Poetry culminated in March with a town wide poetry contest, and visit by former poet laureate of the United States, Robert Pinsky. Weston Reads... Poetry was a collaboration between town departments and the school system. We hope it is the first of many annual reading programs. We have seen a hefty increase in circulation over last year, maintaining our circulation standing as the highest for a town with the population size of Weston's. Also, we have begun compiling our three to five years Long Range Plan. A committee of residents, trustees and staff are looking toward the services we would like to add in the library.

Adult Services

In 2005, library circulation of all materials rose by 16,339 items, an increase of 5.3% over last year. The two top circulation categories were new DVD feature films, and books on CD, both of which increased by approximately 50 percent. Other items that showed significant increase in demand were Large Print Books, Music CDs, Speed Read and new fiction and non-fiction books. In order to entice patrons with our newer offerings, we have placed a cart just in front of the circulation desk with recently returned items. This has proven to be a very popular service, as the cart is regularly emptied.

We spent a lot of time reorganizing the stacks this year. High demand for library DVDs and books on CD dictated moving lesser used videotapes and books on tape to the first two rows of our nonfiction book stacks. Moving videos to the back stacks gave elbow room for our DVDs. Two display racks hold new DVDs, while older DVDs, documentaries and foreign films are arranged in the alcove off the rotunda. Relocating the booktapes to the stacks allows the books on CD room for growth in the nook opposite the music CDs. We also rearranged the music CDs.

Programs offered in the library continue to be very popular. The Weston Military History Group sponsor lectures once per month to sold out crowds. Their lectures are available on DVD for those patrons who may be unable to attend. The Library Book Discussion Group meets once per month and has been in operation for over 25 years. The very active Music Committee offered monthly concerts, and the Music Fest, a day long celebration of music in March. The Friends of Weston Library hosted an array of lectures and programs, including a visit from Chris Stirling, Executive Producer of the television show *Chronicle*, and author Barbara Haber (*From Hardtack to Homefries*). The library is deeply indebted to the scores of volunteers who work so hard for our benefit. The library is truly enhanced for everyone by their support.

Library volunteers are an important part of our service to the public, and this year we were aided by contributions from Ed McKearney, Joanne Hamm, Gene Travers, Margaret Young and Mary Parker.

We encourage our patrons to check out the newly redesigned web site at www.westonlibrary.org. The new site allows for an updated calendar of events at the library, easier navigation, new item lists, contact information and much more. You can also manage your account by clicking on the front page. Be sure to sign up for a 4 digit pin number which you can initiate online or at the circulation desk in the library. Your email address is never shared with any other organization nor is it used for any promotional purposes.

We've had numerous staff changes this year. Helen Olivo, administrative assistant, retired at the end of the year after 18 years of town service. Marianne Doernis-Goldman, a part time circulation assistant for almost 10 years, has taken over Helen's position. New faces at the circulation desk include Leslie Kennedy, Joanne Hamm and Katerina Garozzo. Gail Bosworth, formerly in Technical Service, is our new Reference Librarian, and Renee Hake has taken her place in Technical Services. Tatanya Flannery has taken the position held by Julie Bauer, as Department Head in Reference. Julie was transferred with her family to Virginia.

Reference

The library user with information needs found ready help at the Reference Desk. On a typical day the librarian on duty responded to 35 reference questions in person, by phone or via email. The librarian also attended to requests for advice on recreational reading, provided interlibrary loan service and identified community resources and agencies beyond the library.

An important new feature in the Reference Department is the installation of the Job Center. Strategically located near the busy Computer Lab, this collection was created by assembling relevant materials already in the library's holdings and adding dozens of new titles. Residents of all ages preparing for post-secondary education or mapping a career course will find many excellent resources here.

We recorded 11,897 sign ups for our public computers, and Reference librarians answered over 12,000 questions.

Youth Services

With the addition of Beth Katsoris as a full-time children's librarian, we were able to offer more programs this year, including a Lapsit for toddlers featuring singing, finger plays and rhymes. With more staff, we now have the opportunity to offer more programs than we have for years. In addition to the lapsits, we currently offer two sessions of Two-Year-Old Storytime, two sessions of Family Storytime and a Drop-in Storytime for three- to five-year-olds, three After School Book Clubs for grades one through five, a Pop-up Book Workshop for grades three to five, and the Summer Reading Program, which includes programs by outside performers such as Animal Adventures, Inc., Mr. DJ and Shiney the Star, and singers Julie & Brownie.

This year's Summer Reading Program, "Going Places," was quite successful with 312 participants. Children in the elementary program read more books on average in 2005 than they had any other year, and across the board, more children achieved higher prize levels than in previous years. The Young Adult Program was particularly successful, with the highest number ever of sixth through tenth graders participating. The Friends supported Craft Room was a welcome break from the heat, and our air-conditioned atmosphere was appreciated by many visitors.

With the assistance of The Friends of the Library, we added more DVDs and Books on CD to the library collection, and our statistics for that part of the collection has increased significantly. The

Friends also contributed to the Children's music collection. With this funding, we created a core Children's classical section with the purchase of 20 titles. With the additions of materials in the Young Adult section (see below). The Friends have been very supportive to Youth Services.

Another new feature in 2005 is our collection of comics and graphic novels for younger children. There have been many requests over the past year for "comic books" for children not yet ready for our teen section. We have created a new section in the inset shelves between the Storytime and Craft rooms for those young readers, with a selection ranging from Tintin to various superheroes to Baby Mouse.

Our school visits continue to be a great cooperative experience, with the fifth grade teachers bringing their classes to the library for their World of Work project. Assisting the children to research their chosen professions—especially some of the esoteric professions—is always interesting and exciting. As always, we look forward to this project. Volunteers in Youth Services this year included Jonathan Dec, Derek Park, Molly Hermann, Iris Hermann and Dominique Viglas. Their assistance was greatly appreciated.

Young Adult Collection

This fall, the Friends donated over \$1,000 to be spent on media selections for the Young Adult Collection (DVDs and CDs). As a result, a core Young Adult DVD collection was created that now includes over 50 films. Over 20 new CD titles were also purchased for the Young Adult music collection with these funds. Due to the increase in materials available to Young Adults, this section of the library has become busier over the last few months.

In addition to increasing the Young Adult music and DVD collections, we have also been making an effort to purchase more Young Adult books on CD. We have ordered several new titles over the last six months, thereby bringing our collection more up-to-date and extensive.

Finally, the Friends contributed money to start an Anime Young Adult DVD collection. We have purchased 30 titles for this collection and we are hoping to add to it throughout the year.

Technical Services

The Technical Services Department had a record breaking year in which over 9,300 items were added to our database. The swift processing of complex materials such as Books on CD are a credit to Frank Baxter, and his assistants in Technical Services. Look for new media to come to the library in the form of downloadable audio books.

Arts and Exhibitions Committee

The Arts and Exhibitions Committee had fun this year reviewing work and bringing many different types of art to the community. Two local groups celebrated important anniversaries by displaying their artifacts, photographs and histories in the gallery. WEEFC celebrated 20 years and Land's Sake their 25th. During the other months, printmaking, painting, photography, watercolors and ink drawings were on display. The year ended with an exhibition of paintings by Weston resident John Thompson. Two outside sculptures were removed and a new one, Blue Herons, by Joe Hallowell was installed. The Blue Herons will be in place until the fall of 2007.

Friends of Weston Library

The mission statement of the Friends of the Weston Public Library is "...to support a strong and active public library for the town of Weston and to provide, where needed, resources not otherwise funded."

The Friends, organized in 1965, is an organization funded by Weston residents through their membership dues, their financial contributions and their participation in our Annual Book Sale. We count on the community to donate books for the sale and to purchase books at the sale. The Friends board members and their committees work with the library's director and the staff to

serve the library needs of our town. We sponsor literary and human-interest programs, as well as a yearly concert series organized by the Music Committee. Several trips each year introduce participants to museums, and to cultural and historical sites. Our service to the homebound delivers books and audio-visual materials to town residents who are unable to travel to the library. This year we provided support for the Weston Military History Group, the Children's Summer Reading Program, summer crafts, the yearly Ice Cream Social, museum passes, and the restoration and cataloging of Weston's Historical Archives. We also provided an \$8,000 grant for the purchase of several hundred DVD titles. On behalf of the community we treat the library's staff to an annual luncheon to thank them for their tireless service to the town. This year the Friends initiated stipends for staff members to attend professional conferences. The Friends is an organization of the community for the community. We invite all Weston residents to become members.

REPORT OF THE RECREATION DEPARTMENT

As in years past, 2005 was a very busy year for the Recreation Department as we continued to administer a wide variety of programs for citizens of all ages within the town. The Community Center continued to be a special gathering place for town residents – whether it was hosting the Rotary Club's inaugural Texas Hold 'Em tournament or our annual Holiday Luncheon for the town's senior citizens, there was a constant flow of happy faces parading about the Great Hall and throughout the classrooms around it. With exercise and educational classes running throughout the weekdays and nights, and often being utilized as a parents' dream setting for a child's birthday party on weekends, the Center remains in constant use and is an invaluable asset to the town.

The recreation staff consists of seven full-time employees ably assisted by an ever-evolving staff of part-time help. Whether planning classes, mowing fields, manning guard stations at the town pool or counseling campers at Camp ABC, Camp Adventure, and Outer Limits, the eclectic blend of individuals whom the department employs are as friendly as they are qualified.

The recreation budget for this past fiscal year (FY 05) was \$1,186,155, with off setting revenues of \$943,566; thus the Town General Fund contributed \$365,167 to the Recreation Department budget. The recreation department has used an enterprise accounting system since FY 04 and works closely with the finance committee and the Town Manager to try offer a budget that is 70 %covered by revenues with the Town contributing 30%.

Once again, the Recreation Department spent the year offering an exceptional variety of programs for people of all ages in the town, many of which were offered in our new Center. In 2005, participants enrolled in over 500 programs which we offered during the course of the year. Among the new programs offered this year were Youth cooking classes and Elementary School Drop-in Nights while our traditional offerings of Karate, Chess and Arts & Crafts classes continued to be exceptionally well-attended. Our summer camps were also well attended, with some 1,275 campers taking advantage our diverse and comprehensive offerings during the nine weeks that our camp programs were in operation.

The town pool was once again a gathering spot for residents who took advantage of the exceptional facility and programs we provide there. Our overall attendance figures were in line with years past. The arrival of warmer weather inspired citizens of all ages to take advantage of this remarkable facility, with dedicated seniors doing laps in the early morning and late evening book-ending the campers and family members who populated the pool during the hours in between. By summer's end, 17,360 patrons had visited us during the pool season and had made

our family nights and theme nights events to remember. During the summer, Wednesday night concerts on the Town Green were also a big hit even though Mother Nature wreaked havoc on our musical efforts on a couple of occasions. When she did cooperate, families were able to bring picnic dinners and socialize to the sounds of a variety of musical groups during July and August.

During the winter months, open gym, access to the indoor swimming pool, the ever-burgeoning Red Wave Swimming Program for the town's youth as well as adult basketball programs (the Thursday Night Men's Over 40 League had more participants than ever) continue to complement the arts and crafts, musical and exercise offerings that the department provides.

As usual, the diversity of programs the town is able to offer and smoothly run can be directly attributed to Doug McDougall and his dedicated staff. They continue to deliver top-quality programs at affordable prices - we are indeed fortunate to have such devoted, tireless workers comprising the recreation staff. Please remember to thank them for their efforts the next time that you see them. Finally, we hope that you understand that the year ahead will bring with it budgetary constraints that will challenge the department's ability to provide the same number of programs and high-quality service that it has in the past.