

Library offers intergenerational programming



Ryder Robinson enjoyed the Bancroft Public Library Halloween party with his mother Leah, right, who is speaking with incoming program organizer Louise Villeneuve, left, on Saturday. SARAH VANCE Special to This Week

By Sarah Vance

Bancroft Public Library was a bustle of ghoulish good times on Saturday as families and young people assembled for the annual Halloween celebration. Children arrived in cute costumes to craft masks, participate in literacy lessons, and share their views about the holiday.

"I am putting lots of sparkles on my mask," said Scarlett Jolly-Nielsen who arrived to the party in costume, with her brother True and her mother Jaimi. "I love this party."

Roughly 12 to 15 families register each week for the program, which occurs every Saturday between 10:30 a.m. and noon. Stories, songs and crafts are the norm, with the Halloween party including a game called, "pin the bat on the rafter." The weekly program is well structured with specific blocks of time allocated to whole group circles on the alphabet mat; hands-on craft projects; and a consolidation time when kids sing the popular, "See you Later Alligator," song together.

"I brought Jack here because it was a chance for him to wear his Halloween costume in the daylight," said Jaki McArthur, an educational assistant, who attended the party with her small Batman. "We love opportunities to socialize with other kids, dress in costume and we will be attending the Zombie Walk in Cardiff this afternoon."

While Saturdays at the Bancroft Public Library are largely child centred, a simple glance around the room shows a program which is truly intergenerational in scope. Many of the youth gather under the watchful care of their grandmothers and at times during the program it is difficult to tell who is having the most fun.

There are some new faces at the Bancroft Public Library including Sue Outram, the new chief executive officer who began her role in the middle of October.

"Children's programs are very important here," said Outram. "I am learning about the community and excited to be involved." Bancroft Public Library extends support towards outgoing CEO Vanessa Holmes who has departed Bancroft for new horizons within Ontario's library service field.

"We are very sad to see Vanessa go, but we understand how her choice to work in a different library service was a great positive move for her career," said Noreen Tinney, chair of the board of directors. "She was with us for four years and we are overjoyed for her and this new transition in her career."

Outram relocated to the area in October after getting this highly sought after position at Bancroft's library.

"There were 16 applicants with resumes arriving from as far east as Nova Scotia to as far west as Alberta," said Noreen Tinney.

?We made informed decisions during the application process as there was so much interest.?

?So much goes on behind the scenes from budgeting, assessing current programs and envisioning new ones,? said Outram. ?I am learning my role while getting to know our community and our library.?

Louise Villeneuve, another new face, joined the team earlier this year. Villeneuve brings early children specialities to her role of planning and delivering the programs for kids.

?I am excited about our programs and the attendance has been amazing,? said Villeneuve. ?At times an attendance fee has helped with our registration but we are now piloting programs that run without a fee.?

There are also some new undertakings which are being developed for adults.

?I am looking to facilitate an adult colouring group and will be offering the chance to complete colouring sheets every Thursday,? said Villeneuve. ?Colouring has been found to bring many health benefits, including stress relief, and I encourage adults to join me for this emerging program.?

The in-house services are just as impressive as the many digital books and interactive games offered on the facility's website. Many young people will be familiar with programs like Tumble Books that are used widely in schools and which can be accessed as a clickable link from the library website.

?I hope to reach out to the educators in North Hastings, because our facility has many high quality online educational services,? said Outram. ?I am encouraging teachers to get to know the many great programs we have to offer.?

Bancroft Public Library also provides genealogy databases for patrons seeking free access to their family history.

?We have a downloadable OverDrive application so our patrons can borrow ebooks, audiobooks and videos,? said Outram. ?We look forward to adding Canadian Almanac to our purchases this year.?

The library operates under the direction of a local board, which obtains approvals for budget and board members, at arms-length of municipal council. In 2015 the Town of Bancroft allocated \$110,000 in provincial grants towards the daily operations of this important facility.

?We are providing the best library that we can offer in the space and with the resources that we have,? said Tinney. ?We are always looking for involvement from the community and we encourage individuals and organizations to work with us.?

The library also receives funds allocated by the Township of Faraday. Building a reserve budget continues to be a priority for the library which was able to obtain a surplus of \$34,110 last year.

There are multiple ways that a community can support a library and book sales, planned giving and memorial donations are all a part of this. The most important way of supporting a library however, continues to be actually going through the doors and being a part of the services and activities it has to offer.

?We encourage people to approach us if they have ideas for programs they would like to see offered,? said Tinney. ?Or if they would like to run a program here, we are always very open to listening to ideas.?