

DALTON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Doris Lamica, Library Director

During the year 2003 the library building project progressed as the Designer Selection Committee met frequently. This group composed of representatives from the library, the Council on Aging, the Historical Commission, the Select Board, the general community and the town manager selected Hill Engineering of Dalton to conduct feasibility studies on the optimum site for an expanded library, senior center and Historical Museum. The committee worked with the architect to evaluate numerous sites and scenarios. A building consultant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners visited to view the sites under consideration and to offer her advice and suggestions.

Meanwhile we did some rearranging in the library to create more shelf space for collections and to provide a pleasant reading area. The new collections of DVDs and books on CD are growing in popularity and all of our non-book collections are heavily used and expanding. We moved some furniture and our magazines and newspapers to create an improved reading area which our patrons are enjoying. During the year we added about twenty new magazine subscriptions and we now receive seven daily newspapers. Two new computers were purchased and will be used for Internet access via Road Runner, thanks to Time Warner Cable.

As part of the library's mission is to support the desire for lifelong learning, we presented a number of programs for adults during the year. The seven book discussion programs attracted seventy-two people. The books we read included "The Bonesetter's Daughter," by Amy Tan; "Seabiscuit," by Laura Hillenbrand; and "The Red Tent," by Anita Diamant. These informal discussions are held on the last Wednesday of the month from September to April. All are invited to attend and copies of the books are available to borrow.

A number of patrons enjoyed an informative series of Genealogy Workshops presented in March by genealogist Sue Farnum and Charlotte Davis. A series of videos on art history was shown during the year. The Dalton Arts Council supplied funding for a slide show and lecture on "Wildflowers of the Berkshires" which about twenty five people attended.

The children were also offered a number of programs during the year. Registration for the summer reading program was 217—one of the highest totals ever. During the summer there were four craft programs and three video presentations which a total of 128 children attended. The summer program concluded with a pizza party enjoyed by about 70 hungry children.

Throughout the year storytime programs for pre-school children were conducted by Assistant Librarian Katherine Hoag. These are held on Tuesdays from 11 to 11:30 a.m. September to June, except during school vacations or snow days. The programs are

recommended for ages three to five and include stories, short videos, some crafts and refreshments. No registration is necessary to attend the programs.

In August the library hosted a display for the Dalton High School reunion. Many of those attending the reunion viewed the display here and gathered in the library to visit.

The library received a \$1,000 grant from the Katharine L.W. and Winthrop M. Crane 3d, Charitable Foundation to begin a music CD collection. The Crane Foundation has also helped to fund several projects of the library in the past and we thank them for their contributions.

Another source of support for the library has been the Friends of the Dalton Free Public Library, Inc. The gifts they provided in 2003 included funding for newspaper subscriptions, books for the book group, materials and prizes for the summer reading program, and new books on travel and computers. Their chief sources of fund raising are the membership dues and the annual book sale in the spring. They are always seeking new members and individuals to become actively involved with the executive board and their activities. Officers for 2003-04 are: President–Marjorie Limburg, Vice President–Rosemary Crosier, Secretary –Elizabeth Clark, Treasurer–Catherine Rivers, Members-at-large–Phyllis Strzepa and Richard Lacatell, and Membership Chair–Dee Farrell.

These additional sources of support are particularly helpful in difficult economic times. The past year has been challenging financially as our state aid has decreased and the town was not able to fund requests we had made. With the continued state financial crisis, the future economic picture for the town does not look very bright. The library was intending to implement a new circulation system and an on-line catalog with C/WMARS, the area automated network. Our books have all been re-barcoded and new library cards ordered and received. However, because of the financial problems, we may not have funds for the membership fee for FY-2005 and the Library Trustees have decided to put the project on hold.

I want to thank the staff Katherine Hoag, Lynn Bilotta, Gladys Lofink, Rebecca Foster, Mallory Bessette, Patricia Nixon, Tammi Munn, and Clayton Pease and volunteers Ann Serridge, Joti Smith and paper deliverer James Rivers for their work during the past year. Thank you also to the Trustees, the Friends, the town manager and the Select Board for their assistance and support.