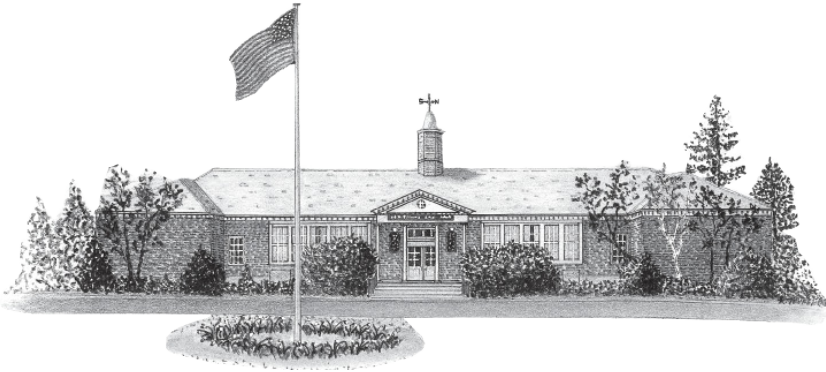


Harborfields Public Library

Celebrating 40 years of Service to the Community!

1970 - 2010

Saturday, September 25, 2010



September 25, 1970

Harborfields Public Library Provisional Charter Granted

November, 1970

The Friends of the Harborfields Public Library Founded

January 11, 1971

Harborfields Public Library Opens to the Community

Harborfields Public Library: A Brief History

The Harborfields Public Library became a reality on June 10, 1970 at the annual Harborfields Central School District Budget vote when residents of the district passed Proposition #3. This proposition provided for the certificate of establishment for a new library, for a library budget appropriation of \$98,780, and for the selection of five library trustees. Two times previously this proposition had been defeated so this vote was a coup for the ad hoc group of people, the Harborfields Citizens' Committee for Library Services, who had worked tirelessly for many, many months to gather community support for the proposition and finally bring library service to the community.

As a first step in establishing the library, the Trustees contracted with the Suffolk Cooperative Library System (SCLS) for weekly Bookmobile service. Each Thursday the Bookmobile parked for a few hours in Greenlawn in the parking lot at the Taylor Ave. School (now the south wing of Harborfields High School) and in Centerport at the old site of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church. Library cards were stamped "Direct Access" allowing cardholders to also use any Suffolk County Library.

Forty years ago on September 25th, 1970 Harborfields Library received its provisional charter. The following week, Robert Trudell began serving as Director. His office was two tiny un-insulated rooms on the second floor of the old Red Barn – a small outbuilding on the north grounds of the high school property. Maureen Buskard, who lived in the community, offered to provide part-time secretarial assistance on a volunteer basis. That December 1st, Maureen was appointed to the salaried position of part-time library clerk and continues as a staff member to this day!

A permanent site for the library was a major problem. As a temporary measure, the Harborfields School District provided a trailer for library use. On January 10, 1971 the Friends of the Library, formed in November 1970 by the core group of the Library Services Committee, held a dedication ceremony. The following day the Harborfields Public Library opened to the public in this 10 by 50 foot trailer parked on the grass strip at the corner of Pulaski Road and Taylor Avenue. The collection consisted of 5,378 books. These books had been stored in the basement of Oldfield Jr. High School and it was a concern how they were going to be moved to the trailer. Mr. Trudell had seen a recruitment poster that said "Ask a Marine." So he did, and it was three United States Marines from the nearby Marine Corps Reserve Training Center who transported the books to the trailer in time for the opening.

In July of 1971, the library moved into larger quarters – two portable classrooms set up adjacent to the Taylor Avenue School. This move was accomplished without cutting service time: the library closed on Friday at 5PM, books were boxed and moved across the parking lot, shelving was dismantled and reassembled in the portables, books were re-shelved and the library was reopened to the public Saturday morning at 10AM! One classroom was used for Adult Services, the second classroom was divided into a Children's Room and office space.

When the T.J. Lahey School was completed in November 1971, the library acquired temporary use of the south wing of the High School building that had been housing the Taylor Avenue School. At first the library used this annex for administrative offices, closed book stacks, technical services and a meeting room. When a book was requested, a staff member would dart, rain or shine, from the portable classrooms to the annex to retrieve the book. Then, on the Memorial Day weekend of 1974, some walls in the annex were torn down, rooms painted, shelves assembled and the six original classrooms were transformed into a library facility. The Adult Services Department now had seating space for reading

and studying and there was a Children's Room, Director's Office and storage room. The portable classrooms housed the Technical Services Department and a Meeting Room.

As the lease on the High School wing was only temporary, the Board of Trustees and Marvin Mounce, who became Director in March of 1974, began to plan for a permanent library facility. A new building was considered the best option and several sites to locate it were investigated. However, expected federal funding did not materialize. So, in the spring of 1976 when the Harborfields School Board voted to close the Broadway School due to declining enrollment, the Library Board of Trustees accepted the offer of the school for library use. Despite an awkward set-up for library service, the central location of the site, the additional space the building provided, and the potential it offered for creative use made the move an exciting event in the library's short history. The building was conveyed to the library "for \$10 and other good and valuable considerations" effective July 1, 1976. The school district retained the adjacent playground for community use.

No extensive renovation or remodeling of the original 1924 five classroom school building and its later additions was undertaken at that time. Since all the space was not immediately needed for library use, the west wing was rented to the Country Gardens Preschool and the Huntington Township Art League and a room in the east wing was leased to the Greenlawn-Centerport Historical Association that, in 1973, the Library Board of Trustees had been instrumental in establishing.

In October 1977, with the hiring of Trudy Brown as the new Director, the library embarked on a program of expansion of materials and services. Almost everyone in the community had a library card – 15,617 cardholders out of a population of 19,910. By July of 1980, the library had a collection of 74,087 books plus periodicals, pamphlets, LP records, audiocassettes, filmstrips, microforms and the beginnings of a videocassette collection. The library loaned framed art and equipment such as cassette players,

movie screens and slide projectors. Renovations to the library became necessary as a result of the library's phenomenal growth in collections and usage. Plans included the enlargement and reconfiguring of the Adult Services area located in the school's old gym, a new Director's Office overlooking it, the redesign of the Circulation desk, the expansion of the Children's area, ramps to make the library handicapped accessible and some smaller remodeling projects.

Library Trustee Phia Volkovitsch and Director Trudy Brown thought of an innovative plan to finance the renovation. Instead of floating a bond issue that would take years to repay, a citizens' committee headed by Joseph G. Gavin, Jr. was organized. Over the course of the next two years, with the help of the Friends of the Library that ran several major fundraisers, sufficient monies were raised from the community to complete the project.

By 1983, the Board recognized the growing importance of computers in the library services field. A new automation code was included in the 1983-4 budget and staff began attending conferences and learning about automation. Paul Elsener, audiovisual librarian, now became the Coordinator of Library Automation.

By 1985, the library had become so crowded it was often necessary to set up folding tables and chairs to accommodate users. It was decided to incorporate the former boys' locker room off the old gym and to remove some classroom walls to expand the fiction area and make space for a Young Adult area. This renovation was financed by a one-time budgetary appropriation.

The library had evolved into a true community center. In addition to library programs, the meeting rooms were used by many community groups. In 1988, 12,261 people had attended programs and over the years, 140,722 people had done so. The meeting rooms were sorely in need of renovation. In November 1988, the Friends presented the library with a \$10,000 check to pay for

planning costs for this renovation. They also started a piano fund. Planning took many months. In March of 1990, Trudy proposed to finance this renovation with a one-time assessment of \$667,000. Our pay-as-you-go policy meant that our library had never had a bond issue, did not have a mortgage. The community passed the 1990-91 budget. Renovation of the wing began in September 1990 and was completed in early spring 1991. The three meeting rooms were now attractive welcoming spaces with state-of-the-art equipment.

By its 20th birthday in 1991, the library contained 96,258 volumes, 462 magazine and newspaper subscriptions, 1882 videocassettes, 2000 CDs and 30,000 pamphlets in the vertical file collections.

Trudy retired in September 1991 and Paul Elsener was appointed Director. New advances in technology were changing libraries. Our technical services, payroll, accounting and circulation departments were automated. We had PCs for public use and many databases were now accessible on CD-ROMs. A Local Area Network (LAN) was installed and internet access became available on all our computers. In June 1995, free e-mail service became available through SCLS and within a short time 200 patrons had established Suffolk Net e-mail accounts. On April 15th, 1994 the paper card catalog was officially closed and the Galaxy Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) was turned on. The paper card catalog was no longer maintained, but remained in place for a while giving patrons time to make the transition to searching for materials on the OPAC. Classes on the new technologies were very popular. Our web page was up and running by June 1998.

Libraries all over were recognizing that buildings would need to be upgraded, reconfigured or replaced to allow for this burgeoning technology. At the same time, there were many problems with the infrastructure of our very old building. The roof leaked, the windows leaked, the boilers leaked. Plumbing and electrical services were not up to code. The hvac system was inefficient and outdated. There were no fire sprinklers. There was insufficient

space for our growing collections and for the requirements of the new technologies. A major renovation of the building became a necessity. Sail Van Nostrand was hired as project manager and Todd Harvey of Beatty, Harvey & Associates as architect. For many months, input was gathered from the staff and the community. The cost, projected at 8.3 million dollars, was to be financed this time through a bond issue. The renovation was to be accomplished in phases so the library could continue to serve the community throughout the duration of the project.

To allow for needed additional on-site parking, the library acquired 65 feet of space from the playground adjacent to the library on the west. Phase one began in the fall of 2002. It involved the relocation and reconfiguration of the playground and the demolition of the west wing. The area under the wing was excavated and a lower level constructed to house the technical services department, staff and storage rooms. Above it, the new Children's area was constructed. New additions were wrapped around the existing Adult Services area. During the second phase the new main entrance on Wyckoff Street, a new lobby and circulation area, a media room, and the new Adult Services area were constructed. The third phase of construction renovated the south side of the building adding new administrative and business offices, an art gallery, a quiet study area, a librarians' office, the College & Career Center and YA Central, the new Teen area.

In June 2005, just before completion of the renovation project, Paul Elsener announced his retirement. Just about complete, the Harborfields Public Library would soon be a state-of-the-art facility, beautiful and functional. Paul, with his vision, hard work, and the ability to keep his sense of humor intact, had made it all a reality! Carol Albano, the Assistant Library Director since January 2003, who had worked closely with Paul on the renovation project, was appointed the new Director.

On Sunday, September 18th, 2005, a ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony celebrated the completion of the Library's expansion

and renovation project. In the October Newsletter Carol Albano wrote that the library has something for everyone from babies to seniors – it is much more than a building filled with books. There are books, programs, discussions, art displays, quiet comfortable places to read or study – “it is the heart and soul of the Harborfields community!”

Now additional space and electrical upgrades enabled the library to provide more computers (including laptops) for adults, teens and kids. Wi-fi was installed. As DVD usage surged, our collection grew to meet the demand. Ryan Athanas, Head of Computer and Technology Services, was appointed Assistant Director in June 2007. Assisted by librarian Sarah Schnepf, they have kept Harborfields on the cutting edge of technology so that our library has been able to serve the community 24/7 in new and better ways. Our website <http://harborfieldslibrary.org> provides a real-time easy-to-use guide to all our resources and activities. Check on upcoming programs, reserve or renew a book, download an e-book, audio book or music, access articles from periodicals, explore careers, learn a foreign language, chat with a tutor, e-mail a question to our reference librarians, reserve a Museum Pass, do your research using over fifty premium on-line databases, read our blogs, or follow the library on Facebook, Twitter or Flickr. In September 2010, Suffolk County libraries joined in a cooperative effort to group the Virtual Reference Library of free online resources into a user-friendly digital branch library. This “Live-brary” is accessible from the library’s web page, in the library or at home, 24/7. All you need is your library card!

Forty years ago the Harborfields Public Library opened in a 10x50 foot trailer. Today we serve the community in a 43,000 square foot state-of-the-art building. Our original collection was comprised of 5,739 items. It has grown to 250,000. In our first year the library circulated 39,166 items. Our current yearly circulation is well over 315,000. Informative and entertaining programs are offered for all ages and interests. Our online services continue to expand.

Our library is much more than books and DVDs. We are a source of information, ideas, inspiration, entertainment, community and friendship. We are a place to have fun, to relax and socialize, and to learn.

The brief history of the Library was written by Carol Bloomgarden
Librarian, Local Historian and Author

Mission Statement

Harborfields Public Library is dedicated to providing access to information, ideas, and knowledge through books, programs, technology and other resources. We welcome and support our community in its pursuit of education, culture and enrichment activities.

Harborfields Public Library
31 Broadway, Greenlawn, NY 11740
631-757-4200
www.harborfieldslibrary.org