

Public Library gets a new face and a tech upgrade

BY DIANNE SAISON
Editor

There is something abuzz at the Richmond County Public Library.

It is all about new technology, improvements to the facility, friendlier public accessibility and an array of programs rarely currently offered by a joint public and college library in the commonwealth.

At the forefront of the crusade to bring books back to the public is a long-serving and dedicated staff, their colleagues at the campus and one man, recently hired to lead the mission: Dan Ream.

Born in Bryn Mawr, Pa., Ream grew up in the Philadelphia area, went to college at the University of South Florida and went on to earn his Masters in Library Science.

Originally hoping to be a teacher, one class changed his life forever and he hopes it will also be the key to enriching the lives of local students, from toddlers, teens to seniors.

"I took a class on how to use a library and something just clicked in me and I realized, "Wow, I want to do this." Ream said in a March 24 interview. "That was 1977 and it has been a long and true satisfaction ever since."

Ream, who also is a guest lecturer at Rappahannock Community College (RCC), which is the headquarters for the county's public library, said that when he applied for the job last year, it just felt natural.

"I worked at VCU for 26 years as the middle manager at library, instruction and

reference service," Ream said. "I was finding I kind of missed teaching freshman and when the position opened at RCC, I was excited. Plus, I was intrigued by working for a public library ... having worked for a college library ... and this is a combination."

Ream took over after Cheri Carl, the former Dean of Libraries, took a short leave only to come back in a different and dynamic position. The job opening gave



Dan Ream, above, is hoping to take his skills as a college librarian to promote the Richmond County Public Library in the community.

Dream what he considers the opportunity of a lifetime.

"It is new and wonderful, especially seeing three year olds come in at the same time as college students," Ream said, who still commuted daily from Richmond City.

"I love the Northern Neck and one of the things I am happy about are the people I see every day at the library," Ream said. "The staff has really been supportive and kind in terms of their patience with me from my transition from a college to a public library."

Since his transition, Ream has initiated programs at the library that he hopes the public will not only embrace, but also make the facility more accessible to people from around the region by adding new and exciting features including a new Facebook page, website and access to dozens of free online medias via Zinio.

"Right on our website you can click on that link and download 56 different magazines in their entirety and keep them forever," Ream said, adding that the library also has a unique policy where there are no late fees for regular books as long as they are returned.

He is also actively looking to partner with local schools to incorporate the interactive library with current curricula.

"What I love about this is that it is a great door opener," Ream said. "We just renovated a little over a year ago so if someone hasn't come in [lately] they may be in for a shock. People are very excited about the children's room and also the computers are very new ... we have iPads

all over the library."

He added that one of his greatest goals is to guide teenagers to the library through intriguing and beneficial programs.

"This month we had a "Petting Zoo" where people could learn the difference between a Nook and a Kindle and in April we will have a program oriented for teens on cartooning," Ream said. "I want to get teenagers in the library, serve them better and get the word out."

Ream also encouraged users to utilize the library's new online calculator, which shows how much each patron saves by borrowing a book rather than buying it.

"It is a breakthrough in expressing the library's value to an individual or family," he said.

Ream, and wife Lucretia McCulley, a librarian at the University of Richmond are about to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary this Sept. Their son, Paul, 24, is currently looking into attending law school and works for Justice Department.

Although he plans to remain a city man, he expressed his amazement at the warm welcome of all of the people he has met on the Northern Neck and looks forward to many years at his current post.

He added that although he encourages online activity, he best enjoys when people come in and he and his staff can teach people about the inner workings of a hands-on library.

"People can contact us by email, phone or in person to ask up for help with research or anything and we love to do it," Ream said.