

Penn Yan Public Library  
214 Main St.  
Penn Yan New York 14527

## Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Adopted by the Penn Yan Public Library Board of Trustees on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### Mission

Penn Yan Public Library's mission is to awaken and satisfy curiosity in the individual, thus enriching the community.

### Narrative:

In November 2014, Penn Yan Public Library hosted a series of roundtable discussions with community members to gauge the public's sense of Penn Yan's strengths and weaknesses, with an eye toward informing what the library can and should offer moving forward. These discussions proved fruitful, providing ample material to guide us as we craft our strategic plan.

The conversations revealed an overriding public interest in several key categories. These included education and educational opportunity; cultural and social enrichment; and community sharing.

### **Education**

The public library, as an American institution, has long been directly involved in education. But discussion participants cited a void in local educational opportunities. They want to see more prospects for the enrichment of gifted children as well as a more broad-based approach for all students, expanding schools' scope beyond their focus on traditional academics. In other words, they would like to see a spotlight on "whatever excites" their children, whether it be in the humanities, sciences, sports, or some other activity.

Participants mentioned their perception of a pride in under-education among some community members, arising from attitudes passed down from one generation to the next, as well as persistent failures of the system in reaching these individuals. Several expressed concern over the ability to shift such attitudes, indicating the difficulty of capturing the drive to break out of one's "cultural limits;" however, most agreed that it's a battle that must be fought.

Another thread of the conversation was a desire to see more educational offerings for adults: "education shouldn't stop at high school's end," some said, but must embrace a commitment to lifelong learning. Participants agreed that, for both children and adults, it takes more than "book smarts" to make a well-rounded, educated human being; the sharing of expertise and interest across a wide range of topics, from public speaking to craftsmanship to poetry, must be offered as well. To attain this, it was suggested that the public library should try "to pick up where school leaves off," possibly in collaboration with Keuka College or Finger Lakes Community College.

Participants felt that this ethos of life-long, passion-based education would improve outcomes for students and boost the economic stock of the community, as well as boosting community members' self-esteem and diversifying the career paths available to them.

### **Social and Cultural Enrichment**

Participants cited a desire for cultural enrichment programs that help individuals in the community “reach their full potential.” To be effective, this enrichment must be “offered for all,” which reflects the democratic nature of the library’s mission, as well as the central role leisure time has assumed in individuals’ sense of well-being. In general, participants desire “a greater variety of experiences for people of all ages and economic levels,” especially encompassing recreational activities that are distinctly non-sports related.

In terms of overall cultural infrastructure in the village and region, they are looking for “fewer improvements for just tourists”—that is, an increase in facilities and activities with local residents in mind, rather than designed to draw weekenders. Participants viewed an increase in non-sports activities for kids, in particular, as a possible bulwark against drug use and other dangerous activities. A focus on “fun opportunities for non-retirees” is another concept that saw support across the conversations.

### **Community sharing (Addressing existential needs; outreach and common identity)**

The broad category of “community sharing” breaks down into two distinct but related branches: meeting of the existential needs of the less fortunate members of the region; and building tighter bonds within the community through the forging of a common identity. Both of these branches of activity may be addressed through cooperation between individuals, organizations, and agencies.

The biggest issue holding the community back from improving on the crucial activities of community sharing is the sense that what we have is “good enough”—the inertia that comes with many of the same groups and individuals making the same efforts, getting “good enough” results, and not going the next step to develop something new. In addition, several participants reported having experienced a “door in the face” attitude when attempting to integrate with pre-existing cultural, social, and service organizations. One group referenced repeatedly as needing greater community outreach was recent immigrants; participants are concerned that they feel “isolated” or “judged” for their migrant status in our community. It was mentioned that the non-immigrant citizens of Penn Yan would benefit from education on immigration, immigrants, and cultural interaction. For the immigrant population itself, participants noted that it may be necessary to combat the misconception that all government entities are antagonistic and potentially harmful to them; many avoid the library and other agencies for fear of negative consequences. Participants supported the idea of providing opportunities for immigrants, as they “create business and add richness to the community.”

Poverty was also a concern for participants; they expressed an aspiration for everyone in the community to simply have adequate access to shelter and food. A repeated sentiment was that individuals “can’t attain their full potential while just surviving.” Some also spoke of the stigma associated with certain social service agencies, a prejudice that must be combated. In addition to these issues, a major theme of the discussions was public transportation, the introduction of which could be a great help to those in

poverty as well as the general population. The ARC buses were mentioned as a potential model or solution to this lack, as well as various grants and sources of state or federal funding.

Another major concern is communication. Participants felt that the library and other organizations could make better use of social media and communications technology services such as text messaging to get the word out about their offerings more widely and efficiently. Most of the small discussion groups indicated a need for a centralized “hub” from which most, if not all, community service and cultural activities could be coordinated and promoted, though it was noted that efforts to establish such a hub in the past have met with little success. Improved communication may have a bearing on another aspiration of the participants, involving “more generational mixing in activities, organizers, [and] organizations,” as well as ensuring that all community members have equal opportunity to thrive thanks to cultural and social offerings.

Community members saw a great opportunity in the recent flooding experienced in Penn Yan. Despite that event’s negative impact on the community, most participants said that they felt the community was improved by a sense of common striving and a need to take care of one another. A major goal, then, would be to foster that community feeling outside of “crisis situations.” The hope is that this would contribute to a “pride of ownership” in the community’s successes, as well as help in the “development of a community will to change” its negative aspects. –AA

### **Goal 1 The Library brings diverse groups together.**

**Objective 1-** Programs specifically for or about diverse populations will be presented at least 6 times a year.

**Objective 2-** The number of *English as Second Language (ESL)* materials circulated will increase by 2% a year.

#### ***Action ideas***

-Staff will address diverse interests and needs by collecting and promoting materials with diverse viewpoints and in a variety of formats. AG, SC

-The ESL collection will be updated continuously. AG

-The Library will continue to offer the Mobile Library Service. AL, SH, DR, AG

-The library staff will continue to make efforts to promote library services to outreach groups.

- Blind or physically disabled
- Aged
- Developmentally or learning disabled
- Institutionalized
- Members of ethnic groups in need of special services such as ESL speakers
- Educationally disadvantaged
- Unemployed or underemployed
- Geographically isolated AG, SC, AA

-Library staff will tailor programming efforts according to local, state, and national - observations of diverse populations, such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, Pride Month, etc. AA

## **Goal 2 The Library provides educational opportunities for all.**

**Objective 1-** The library will offer technology programming for adults at least 12 times a year.

**Objective 2-** Use of all the non-fiction collections will remain steady or increase by 2% a year.

**Objective 3-** The library will provide at least three programs just for parents/guardians a year.

### ***Action ideas***

-The library will work with the Yates Early Literacy Initiative to provide early literacy education to children and families. SC

-The Non-fiction collections will continue be well managed for currency, accuracy, and public interest. AG, AA, SC

-The Library staff will keep in contact with community agencies, service clubs, churches and other organizations in order to offer dually sponsored in-house and outreach programs. AG, AA, SC

-Staff will offer technology education classes focusing on computer basics as well as personal safety and privacy, communication, and personal management applications. AA

-Programs and collections geared toward job seekers and career advancers will be bolstered. AG, AA

-Staff will make use of the Outdoor Learning Area for fitness programs and education for all ages. AA, SC

## **Goal 3 The Library provides social and cultural enrichment for all.**

**Objective 1-** At least four additional indoor seating spaces will be created.

**Objective 2-** The library will provide adult outreach programs at least 6 times a year in addition to the Mobile Library Service.

**Objective 3-** Full advantage will be taken of the Outdoor Learning Area with at least two events planned per week during July and August.

### ***Action ideas***

-The paperback spinners will be removed and at least one more table and 4 chairs will be placed in the main part of the library. AG

-Seating in the Youth Services area will be upgraded. SC

-Adult programming will focus in part on pop culture and niche interests, within and outside the library to provide engagement for all Penn Yan residents. AA, SC

-At least one concert or musical program will be offered per quarter. AA

-Staff will make use of the Outdoor Learning Area for social and cultural events such as concerts and read-outs. AA, SC

-Staff will offer “roving reference” services at key locations around the community. AA

**Goal 4 The Library is a community information and resources hub.**

**Objective 1** The library will promote community information using social media at least weekly.

**Objective 2-** Library staff will continue to hear from agency representatives at roundtable meetings at least 3 times a year.

***Action ideas***

-The library staff will create an efficient process to obtain and then share community stories and links via our social media outlets and website. AA, SC

-The library will create a Youth Services Tumblr to explore new ways of connecting with teen and new adult patrons. AA, SC

-The library will create “five great things to do in Penn Yan this week/month” lists to post on social media. AA, SC

-The library will create and promote a local happenings board through its Pinterest presence. AA, SC

-The library will continue to post flyers for community organizations. AG