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A changing of the guard at Laconia Public Library

Patrons will see faces both familiar and new

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LACONIA — Visiting the Laconia Public Library this summer, you'll see some new faces, as well as some familiar ones in new roles. Since this spring, the library has welcomed a new children's librarian, children's department library technician, adult services librarian, and library director. Of the group, half are new hires, and the other half, including Library Director Deann Hunter, are employees stepping up to take on larger roles.

These staff changes bring an influx of new ideas, retain internal experience and knowledge, and put the library in front of a new threshold.

"Everything has led up to this moment," John Moriarty, chair of the Laconia Public Library Board of Trustees, said in an interview. "We've cleared most of the hurdles away and we are poised, ready to provide the best possible service."

Moriarty emphasized that collective staff efforts during recent decades have put LPL in a position to look confidently toward the future while still providing traditional services at a high standard.



New children's librarian Jamie Dalton, left, new library Director Deann Hunter, center, and new library technician in the children's department Carly Roy, right, at a June 14 reception celebrating the passing of the baton to Hunter from outgoing director Randy Brough. Read all about the new staff, page 7. (Catherine McLaughlin/The Laconia Daily Sun photo).

Making the transition

The library held a reception to welcome its new hires and to mark the transition between the incoming director and outgoing director Randy Brough on June 14.

In his remarks at the event, Moriarty, who became a library trustee in

2001 and became the chair in 2015, commended Brough for the amount of evolution and adaptation he had overseen at the library during his tenure.

Brough became library director in 2001. Since then, the library has expanded its parking area, converted to a digital card catalog, adopted the Biblionix digital platform, undergone significant policy development,

CHANGES from page 1

started offering ebooks and audio-books and, of course, built a large addition. According to Moriarty, just shy of 3 million books were circulated at LPL during Brough's time as director.

These changes to the library were made "in an environment in a constant state of evolution in the last 25 years, where every five or six years is totally different from the ones before," Moriarty said.

"That's a lot to be a part of, a lot of change," Moriarty said. "We are grateful for these accomplishments, but none of it was done in a vacuum. And we're just getting started."

At the reception, Moriarty enthusiastically congratulated new Director Deann Hunter, who first joined LPL in 2003.

Hunter was the clear choice to succeed Brough, whether she had been an inside hire or not, Moriarty said in his remarks.

Also speaking at the reception, Hunter thanked Brough for his service and mentorship and outlined the trajectory of growth she saw for the library.

"The library renovation was completed in 2005. Much has changed about the way our community uses its library since then," Hunter said in her remarks. "We want to ensure that our existing spaces are being utilized in the best way possible."

Meeting community needs

Increasing digitization of education, news, record keeping and research — among many other things — has changed what people need from libraries and what libraries offer patrons.

"The library is becoming more of a community center for people. People come just to visit and say hello, to use a meeting space, or just to hang out," Hunter said in an interview. Additionally, patrons increasingly use electronic services for research and reading, such as electronic and audio books.

The understanding of this changing role in the community drives upcoming space planning initiatives at the library.

The library is in the process of examining "what spaces aren't being used the way they could be used, not being fully utilized," Hunter said. Some spaces, such as the reference room, could be reappropriated to better support the ways patrons are actively engaging with the library.

At the same time, the library still serves patrons in more traditional ways, whether that be through the circulation of books or free access to computers and the internet.

The library is thus tasked with preserving and enhancing its ability to provide traditional functions of a library while also making space for it to evolve with the needs and interests of the community.

"Books will always be a big part of the library," Hunter said.

Moriarty said it is his personal mission that the library be able to look equally forward and backward.

"Librarians are seen as an artifact of history, which isn't accurate," he said. "The staff understands with fluency the balance between the traditional and constant services of the library and the ever evolving role it plays in serving the community."

Hunter said, in addition to space planning, she is excited for the "reenvisioning of the children's room," which involves both cosmetic updates and an influx of new toys for their play-based learning area.

Overall, she hopes to "spread the word" about what the library has to offer members of the community, especially those who currently underutilize its resources. Whether it is free wifi, help with computer use, copiers, scanners, printers, meeting rooms, guidance with research projects, or even just a quiet place, libraries have something to offer everyone, she said.

Moriarty said that both LPL veterans and new employees are assets in this new chapter.

"We are lucky to have staff with the longevity that we do," Moriarty said. At the same time, the fusion of that with new faces and new energy is also a gain.

"The best is yet to come," Moriarty said.