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FENNVILLE DISTRICT LIBRARY RECEIVES NATIONAL GRANT FOR SMALL AND RURAL LIBRARIES
\$10,000 Grant Will Help the Library Work with Residents with Disabilities to Access Books

FENNVILLE —Fennville District Library has been selected as one of 310 libraries to participate in round two of Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities, an American Library Association (ALA) initiative that provides community engagement and accessibility resources to small and rural libraries to help them better serve people with disabilities.

The competitive award comes with a \$10,000 grant that will help the library better serve patrons with vision impairments.

“We are so excited to be chosen for this amazing opportunity,” said Assistant Library Director Abi Avery. “This grant will allow the library to learn more about what our patrons with disabilities need from the library and allow us to begin making the necessary changes now, so that everyone in the community is able to fully utilize our services.”

As part of the grant, Fennville District Library staff will take an online course in how to lead conversations, a skill vital to library work today. Staff will then host a conversation with residents about making the library collection more accessible and use the grant funds to expand the collection to include a wider variety of titles in accessible formats.

“Due to lack of space and funds, the audiobook and large print collections have become some of the less well-maintained collections in the library,” said Avery. “Our initial plan is that this grant will help us revitalize them, though we’re keeping an open mind. We may need to pivot based on what we hear from our community conversation participants. The goal of this grant isn’t just to provide a more accessible library, but also to create that accessibility in ways that people say they need.”

If you are interested in getting involved or taking part in the conversation, please contact Abi Avery at 269-561-5050 or aavery@fennvillelibrary.org, or visit www.fennvilledl.michlibrary.org for more information.

Since 2014, ALA’s Libraries Transforming Communities initiative has re-imagined the role libraries play in supporting communities. Libraries of all types have utilized free dialogue and deliberation training and resources to lead community and campus forums; take part in anti-violence activities; provide a space for residents to come together and discuss challenging topics; and have productive conversations with civic leaders, library trustees and staff.



“Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL).”

The Fennville District Library began as the Woman’s Club Library in 1922, and it incorporated as its own organization in 1966. It is ranked by the Library of Michigan as a Class IV library, currently serving the information and reading needs of more than 14,496 patrons who live in the district or in the townships that contract with it for library services. Its service area is made up of the City of Fennville, the townships of Casco, Clyde, Ganges, Lee by contract, and the portion of Manlius Township that lies south of the Kalamazoo River (by contract). It holds more than 65,000 items in its own collection, with access to more than four million items owned by the member-libraries of the Lakeland Library Cooperative. It also participates in both the MLibrary Card and MeLCat programs, providing patrons with access to millions more items throughout the state of Michigan.

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