

# Union Twp. Library hours cut due to financial crisis

by Alona Hayden

As a result of Branch District Library's current financial crisis, Union Township Library's hours have been cut this year.

The library will no longer be open Monday evenings which, excluding Saturday, was the library's only time slot not in regular business hours.

"The cuts are purely for financial reasons," said branch manager Pat Kaniewski. "Branch District Library is having budget problems, and that trickles down to us and all other branches."

Kaniewski says that while the hour cuts are not ideal, few library patrons will be affected.

"Not many people come in the evening, except for one family in particular, because the

mother works during normal business hours," she stated.

Kaniewski plans to help that family by corresponding through email and dropping books off at their home, since they live down the street from the library.

"We want to continue serving our patrons the best we can," she said.

So far, Kaniewski hasn't heard many comments from the community about the hour changes.

Kaniewski hopes that this is not a permanent change, but says that there would have to be an increase in revenue for BDL for the previous hours to be reinstated. While hours at branches have been cut, Kaniewski says that the Union City community can help at the local level.

"If local businesses and individuals were to pick up the slack with donations, that money would be set aside for our library," she said.

The library's budget for new books has also been cut, and will see an almost \$2,000 reduction this year. The previous budget was \$5,500.

"Patrons haven't commented yet, but they will when they realize that there are new books coming out that we don't have," stated Kaniewski.

However, because Union Township Library can borrow books for patrons from all libraries in the BDL system, most titles will still be available, with many copies of popular books.

Other library services have

been affected as well. Because of a cut in Kaniewski's hours, she can no longer hold story and craft time in the mornings before regular library hours.

"That will be an adjustment," she said, "but, so far, I have had volunteers come in to help me with those programs."

Funds have also been cut for programs by professional presenters, though the Friends of the Library group has picked up that responsibility. FOTL will also cover costs for the summer reading program, which the library hosts each year.

"As always, we appreciate the community's support while we work through these difficulties," said Kaniewski.

Library hours are: Tuesday and Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. - 5



Pat Kaniewski

p.m.; Friday, 9:30 a.m.  
p.m.; and Saturday, 9  
noon.



# AREA

QUESTIONS? Call 517-278-2318

BRANCH COUNTY DEMOCRATS

## Library board members address funding woes

From staff reports

COLDWATER — “In the 13 years that I have been on the Library Board we have never been in a worse financial condition than we are right now.”

These words, spoken by Coldwater attorney Dorothy Cherry, rang out in the Coldwater Township Hall recently during the regular monthly meeting of the Branch County Democrats. Library Director Evette Atkin and Cherry were asked to come to explain to the group the financial problems facing the library.

“Our library is in desperate shape at this point in time,” emphasized Cherry, who serves as the Library Board President. “We are trying to provide library services now on less money than the district had available to it when consolidation took place in 1991. It is a very serious situation.”

Serious too is the condition of the city-owned library building. It is an aging structure, but the City of Coldwater has no financial responsibility for its upkeep under the 1991 lease that transferred responsibility for building repairs and maintenance for 25 years to the District Library. Built in 1886, the library building has recently needed roof repairs, brick and mortar repairs, maintenance on gutters, and fresh paint.

“Since 2004,” said Cherry, “The District has put over \$500,000 into repairs, and the building needs right

now about \$200,000 more in repairs. We have no money, but the Library is 100 percent responsible for all repairs and maintenance for the building.”

The Branch District Library in Coldwater is a consolidated library, with headquarters in Coldwater and five other branches throughout the county. There are large branches in Union Township, Quincy, and Bronson, with small branches in Algansee and Sherwood Townships. As recently as 2009 the budget to operate all six branches was \$1.1 million. Now due to a loss of revenue, the six libraries that make up the district are operating on about \$900,000.

The State Constitution guarantees that penal fines should be used to support public libraries. Penal fines come primarily from traffic violations, criminal convictions, and in the case of Branch County fines — from the weigh station located south of Coldwater on I-69. When those truck scales broke down, Michigan State Police did not have the \$4 million needed to fix the scales so the revenue from penal fines has plummeted.

About two years ago, the Branch District Library received \$25,000 a month in penal fines. Now the District receives on the average \$10,000 a month. One third of the library's operating budget is disappearing.

Evette Atkin, director of the Branch District Library,

pointed out that the library collects over \$600,000 in taxes, based on its .06 rate of millage, one of the lowest rates in the state. Other libraries in the state comparable in size to the Branch District Library have a millage rate of 1.7 to 2.8. Calhoun County's millage rate is 1.7, and that is just for one building in Marshall. Branch District provides library services in six buildings on .06, with only four full-time employees and 26 part-time workers — workers whose wages have been frozen for three years and now are having their hours cut drastically.

Yet Atkin added that the Branch District Library offers so much to the community. In 2012 almost 550 programs were offered to people, from toddlers to senior citizens. It was the Branch District Library that first brought the Internet to Branch County in 1993.

“Today in 2013,” said Atkin, “For many people the only access to the Internet is through the library. We have computers that anyone can use for free without a library card. We have free wireless network at all of our branches that anyone can come and use. After hours branch managers have driven past the Sherwood branch at 2 in the morning, and there are cars parked outside the library. People are on their laptops, getting their work done, checking their email, or Facebook, using the free wireless.”

Automation services alone cost the District \$30,000 a year.

The Branch District Library offers free resume printing and free job application printing to anyone who comes in. People can get music CDs, movies, and of course books, even books that can be downloaded onto a Kindle for a two-week period. At Coldwater and at the Union Township Library are extensive local historical collections.

Don't expect the library to start charging for its services, despite its financial straits.

“The Library is a public service organization,” says Atkin. “We don't sell it.”

Cherry added that charging for services would require more staff, more accounting, and in some cases, obtaining a license. Then, she explained that every person in the state of Michigan, even those who are not tax-payers, have a constitutional right of access to a public library.

Since the Library receives tax money, the Library Board cannot solicit money. However, a donation letter has been circulated in the community and there are donation envelopes at all the circulation desks.

Also discussed at the meeting was the need for a possible millage vote for the library's in the future. The Branch County Democrats passed a resolution of support for the Branch District Library in its efforts to obtain additional funds.

GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION

## Foster Grandparent Volunteer Day

Approximately 1,100 Foster Grandparent volunteers are being recognized for contributing 1 million hours of service to nearly 8,000 children across the State of Michigan.

Gov. Rick Snyder has proclaimed today as Foster Grandparent Volunteer Day.

The Foster Grandparent Program provides seniors the opportunity to love, mentor, and tutor children in a supervised setting. Volunteer placements are all individualized to meet the volunteers' and children's needs. Foster Grandparent volunteers not only provide hours of valuable service, but are also a model for successful aging.

“The Foster Grandparent Program is a wonderful way for seniors to be involved in their community. Foster Grandparents help improve reading, and benefit the children in ways that last a lifetime,” stated Brenda Noblit, Foster Grandparent Program Coordinator. Community Action's

Foster Grandparent Program began in Branch and Calhoun Counties in 1972 and expanded into St. Joseph and Barry Counties in 1997. Foster Grandparent Volunteers serve children in public schools, Head Start classrooms, domestic violence shelters, and preschool centers under the direct supervision of a teacher or administrator.

Participants may volunteer 15 – 40 hours a week. All volunteers must successfully pass a background check in order to participate in the program. Volunteers receive free training, transportation assistance, and a modest, non-taxable stipend that does not affect Social Security.

The Foster Grandparent Program is always seeking men and women who would like to make a difference in a child's life and the community. To find out how you can become involved, call the Community Action office at (877) 422-2726 or visit us online at [www.caasc.org](http://www.caasc.org).

CONSTITUENTS WELCOME

## Caswell hosts office hours

BRONSON — Sen. Bruce Caswell invites constituents from the 16th District to join him for office hours at the Bronson Cafe in Bronson on Saturday from 8 to 9:30 a.m.

Everyone is welcome to meet with Sen. Caswell during this time to discuss their concerns and ask questions. Please note

that the in-district office hours are for individual, one-on-one conversations with Caswell. Anyone who would like to schedule a time for Caswell to meet in a larger group setting should contact his office to arrange a meeting. To do so, call (866) 305-0316 or email [SenBCaswell@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:SenBCaswell@senate.michigan.gov).

**COLDWATER TOWNSHIP**  
319 SPRAGUE ROAD,  
COLDWATER MICHIGAN 49036  
(517) 279-9388

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING (2<sup>nd</sup>)**  
ON THE:  
SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL  
FOR:  
SOUTH MOOR DRIVE/ROAD  
MAINTENANCE-PRIVATE DRIVE

**TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF COLDWATER, BRANCH COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:**

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that the supervisor and assessing officer of the township has reported to the township board and filed in the office of the township clerk for public examination a special assessment roll prepared by them covering all properties within the Special Assessment District to be known as: South Moor Drive/Road Maintenance for the Private Drive. The properties listed on this roll will have benefited by the proposed maintenance project. Said assessment roll has been prepared for the maintenance project. Said assessment roll has been prepared for the purpose of assessing the costs of the ESTIMATED maintenance work thereto within the aforesaid Special Assessment District which total assessment for the district is estimated to be \$445.00 with an estimated Cost per individual lot/parcel to be: \$24.72.

**PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE** that the assessing officer has further reported that the assessment for each parcel of land within said district also benefits relative to the portion of the whole sum levied against all parcels of land in said district.

**PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE** that the township board will meet at the COLDWATER TOWNSHIP HALL, COLDWATER MICHIGAN, on **February 4, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.** for the purpose of reviewing said special assessment roll and hearing any objections thereto. Said roll may be examined at the office of the township clerk during regular business hours which are: Monday thru Friday, 9 am - 4 pm and may further be examined at said hearing. Appearance and protest at the hearing held to confirm the special assessment roll is required in order to appeal the amount of the special assessment to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

An owner or party of interest, or his or her agent, may appear in person at the hearing to protest the special assessment, or shall be permitted to file his or her appearance or protest by letter and his or her personal appearance shall not be required. (The owner or any person having an interest in the real property who protests in person or in writing at the hearing may file a written appeal of the special assessment with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 30 days after the confirmation of the special assessment roll.)

Diane Morrison  
Clerk

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319 SPRAGUE ROAD,  
COLDWATER MICHIGAN 49036  
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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING (2<sup>nd</sup>)**  
ON THE:  
SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL  
FOR:  
NORTH MOOR ESTATES & SOUTH MOOR AREA  
WATER-WELL MAINTENANCE

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**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that the supervisor and assessing officer of the township has reported to the township board and filed in the office of the township clerk for public examination a special assessment roll prepared by them covering all properties within the Special Assessment District to be known as: North Moor Estates & South Moor Area Water-Well Maintenance. The properties listed on this roll will have benefited by the proposed maintenance project. Said assessment roll has been prepared for the purpose of assessing the costs of the ESTIMATED maintenance work thereto within the aforesaid Special Assessment District which total assessment for the district is estimated to be \$14,060.00 with an estimated cost per individual IMPROVED lot/parcel to be: \$355.95 and an estimated cost per individual VACANT lot/parcel to be \$177.97.

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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING (2<sup>nd</sup>)**  
ON THE:  
SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL  
FOR:  
NORTH MOOR & AREA DRIVES/ROADS  
MAINTENANCE-PRIVATE DRIVES

**TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF COLDWATER, BRANCH COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:**

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# The Daily REPORTER.com

THE DAILY NEWSPAPER FOR BRANCH COUNTY — COVERING COLDWATER, BRONSON, QUINCY, UNION CITY AND TEKONSHA

### SUPPORTING PROGRAMS



Above, Friends of the Library members Kathy Madden, Marilyn Johnson, Betty Galloway, John Rick, Marv Carman, branch manager Pat Kaniewskip, clerk Sandra Patterson, and Colleen Knight of the Branch County Community Foundation accepting a donation from lifetime Union City residents, Jack and Phyllis Bronson. COURTESY PHOTO

## Bronson family makes donation to Union City Library

COLDWATER — At the end of November, the Union Township Library Friends of the Library host “Creating Your Legacy Today” with Colleen Knight of the Branch County Community Foundation (BCCF) and Mary Guthrie of Southern Michigan Bank and Trust presenting. The presentation highlighted the variety of ways donors can contribute through the BCCF to support the library, including legacy gifts through a will or trust.

The presentation, along with recent media coverage about the dire financial situation the local libraries in Branch County are facing, motivated lifetime Union City residents Jack and Phyllis Bronson to make a significant donation to the BCCF to be placed in the Union Township Friends of the Library endowment fund. Income from the fund supports programs and enhanced services at the newly constructed Lucille E. Dearth Union Township Library.

“We’ve been inspired by all the hard work put into making the library a beautiful reality for our

### About the BCCF

■ The Branch County Community Foundation is an IRS recognized non-profit organization and a nationally accredited community grantmaking foundation and that serves communities in Branch County and Colon by supporting charitable giving, building permanent endowments and connecting community resources.

■ For more information about making a donation, contact the BCCF at (517) 278-4517 or visit their website at [www.BRCOFoundation.org](http://www.BRCOFoundation.org).

community. The Friends of the Library, including John Rick and Marv Carman and many others, worked tirelessly to make it happen. We think an endowment with the Branch County Community Foundation is the best way to insure that operating funds for the library will be there for many more years to come,” said Phyllis Bronson. “We encourage others to step up and help out this effort, too”.

The income from the Bronson’s gift to the endowment will help provide children’s story time; arts and crafts for children and adults; Red Cross babysitting course; professionally hired speakers on nature, science, music and art; children’s entertainment productions for plays and puppet shows; and adult reading groups.

“The Bronson’s were able to make a very large gift, and we are very grateful for their generosity,” said Knight, executive director of the BCCF. “We still need to grow the fund because, as budgets tighten, that

endowment income will be increasingly important in keeping and enhancing the wonderful programs and vital services at the library. A gift of any size helps generate income year after year. Our hope is that with people seeing the major strain on the library system, other people who love the library will be inspired by Jack and Phyllis Bronson.”

Other ways to leave a legacy of a thriving library include volunteering at the library, donating a brick, or donating to the Friends by dropping off a donation to the library.

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COVERING COLDWATER,  
BRONSON, QUINCY, UNION  
CITY AND TEKONSHA

## SNOW DAY AT THE LIBRARY



Schools all across Branch County were closed Monday due to snowy and icy conditions. Many students used the day off as an opportunity to hang out at the Coldwater branch of the Branch District Library. Above, from left, Bailey Fee, 12, Maddie Chetister, 13 and Kortney Sandahl, 14, all of Coldwater, work on art projects. At right, brothers Fahem and Bakeel Abdullah, 14 and 12, play games on the library's computers. PHOTOS BY CHRISTY HARRIS-HART



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THE DAILY NEWSPAPER  
FOR BRANCH COUNTY —  
COVERING COLDWATER,  
BRONSON, QUINCY, UNION  
CITY AND TEKONSHA

BRONSON CITY COUNCIL

## New media room coming in library

By Ardis Baad  
abaad@voyager.net

BRONSON — The Bronson Public Librarian's yearly report and a water reliability study set the pace for the Bronson City Council meeting Monday.

Librarian Lynnell Eash told the council that the new addition to the library will be completed and open to the public the first week of March. Eash led council members on a tour of

the new addition following the council meeting. The newly constructed media room and an office area behind the circulation desk will soon have carpet and cabinets.

Eash said that hours at the library were cut to 25 a week due to financial difficulties at the Branch Area Library District. The cuts mean the library is now closed on Thursdays. The

**SEE LIBRARY, A8**

## LIBRARY

From Page A1

2013 book budget was cut from \$7,500 to \$5,000.

Library attendance increased by 1,144 patrons to 30,754 in 2012. Circulation increased by 1,423 items. Computer use was down.

Mr. Dan Lewis PE and Mr. Mike Schwartz PE, representing Prein and Newhof, highlighted the Water Reliability Study. The study based on 2011 data evaluated water system demands, fire demand

requirements and the water supply infrastructure. Schwartz said well four and well five are not pumping up to their ratings. They are rated for 750 gallons per minute. Well four and well five pump 620 gpm and 420 gpm respectively. Schwartz said both wells could be rehabed to pump 750 gpm.

He also recommended the city replace all 4-inch mains with 8-inch mains.

Lewis and Schwartz discussed the pros and cons of replacing the present water tower with a larger capacity

tower.

The study also recommended purchasing a separate generator for the water system to supply water during electrical outages.

Council approved purchase of a 102 kw Kohler Generator, for \$32,950.00.

The water reliability study is available for public inspection at the city office.

In old business, council approved an interlocal agreement with are townships for Recycling Services. Dumpsters for recycling will be located on the old L.A. Darling site.