

During the career of a library director there are countless opportunities to meet a great number of people who share the experience of books and believe in the institution of the public library and all that it represents. As the director of this library I have had the honor of working with an involved board of trustees, a dedicated staff, and at the same time meeting many members of this community. Relationships are formed over the circulation desk. Funny stories are told, picture of grandchildren or pets are shared, joys as well as concerns are conveyed. Toddlers have grown into well-spoken young adults graduating from kindergarten, eighth grade, high school, and even college. Passings sadden our days, leaving our hearts heavy as we miss visits from our “regular” patrons.

One patron, Ann Soderstrom, was one of the regulars. Ann not only volunteered to help with countless projects here at the TFL, she also believed in the institution and valued the importance of a library for its role in educating in citizenry. A weekly visitor when I first came to TFL, she was a wisp of a woman already in frail health. She would carry her large bag of books up the front stairs and stop at the main desk for a breather before embarking on her search for reading materials for the next week. A proud woman, I would have to fabricate reasons to go outside so I could carry her bag of books out to her car. When she told me she could no longer make it to the library I offered to deliver books to her home and thus began a bi-weekly and then monthly ritual that continued until her death. I would select a large bin of books for her, giving her lots of choices. When I delivered books we would spend a few minutes talking. She always asked about the library, wondered if the kids in Henniker appreciated our programs, how many books they checked out, and wanted to know what we were doing to improve the library and the services that were offered to the community.

Shortly after her passing in 2008 the trustees received a copy of her will in the mail. We found out that Ann left 50% of her estate to the Tucker Free Library. Her commitment to libraries played out in that she also left 25% of her estate to the Fuller Public Library in Hillsboro and the last 25% to the Penacook Branch of the Concord Public Library. When Ann died she did so quietly. There was no memorial service or monument erected for her. On June 24th, Ann would have celebrated her 82nd birthday. Let us pause for a moment of silence to remember Ann and in that moment thank her for the gift she left the Henniker community.

While all building projects are important, benefactor-based projects carry an even greater emotional investment. Honoring the intent of a gift is a great responsibility, one that the trustees and I were ever vigilant of as this project evolved. As the individual who designed this revitalization project, I felt a special need to make certain that I remembered Ann at every decision-making point in the process. I think she would be very pleased that we honored the traditional architecture of the Main Floor and created a modern artistic space in the youth area. While it is not a monument, what we have done with a portion of her gift is a fitting tribute to a woman who cared about the long-term viability of this library.

When I applied for this position 9 years ago I included an essay that summarized my belief that a library director was a conductor, a successful one creating a beautiful symphony. Just as my philosophy is to build a library collection where everyone can find themselves, to actually have a part in the building or revitalization of this institution allows us to create a space where everyone feels welcome to engage in whatever capacity they need. Be it a social interaction talking about books with friends, the need to find something for the grandchildren to do during school vacations, a quiet area to read, a public fax machine and scanner, or the latest technology to find a job – this library can now offer all of those things.

Special thanks to our staff of the Tucker Free Library. From the very beginning of the discussion about this project, the women of the Tucker Free Library have stood beside me for every decision. We worked together to find the best products, we argued over carpet colors, we came up with shelving schemes and decorative themes. I knew I could bounce ideas off of them and they would tell me if it would work. They trusted me when I changed the color of the carpet and pushed them to make radical decisions. They never complained when we weeded the collection, developed a new shelving system, or asked them to move books (sometimes more than once). When I posted the work schedule and task list for the week that we were going to be closed while the carpeting was installed every staff member willingly signed up to help out. They weeded the garden, dusted the woodwork, polished the marble and granite, washed and shined the large windows, vacuumed the corners, ceiling, and bricks, climbed ladders and scooted along the floor. As I stood back and watched the staff completing these job (jobs best characterized as

duties well beyond any of our job descriptions), I saw that they were doing the tasks with such care that I could only think of the word love to describe their efforts.

When the trustees of the Tucker Free Library asked voters for permission to spend \$50,000 of the Soderstrom Trust Fund to create this space and carpet the entire library your affirmative vote made you a critical part of this library revitalization team along with the trustees, staff, and most importantly Ann Soderstrom.

Everyone involved with this project is now part of the institutional tapestry. For the historical record I want to thank: the tax payers of Henniker who supported this project with an affirmative vote at town meeting, March 16, 2013. The Board of Trustees – Patti N. Osgood, Scott Turner, Christine Putnam Anderson, Jamie Ramsey, and Emily O'Rourke. Staff members -- Lori Roukey, Denise Getts, Kristin Mason, Lynne Lawrence, and Erin Lonigan. Marc and Reuven Aucoin installed cables for the internet and outlets for patrons to plug their laptops into. Jon Routon and his crew painted the ceiling and walls of the Soderstrom Area. Andrea Hoehn of Atkinson Flooring planned the carpet installation. Granite State Glass designed and installed the door to the Soderstrom Media Center and Reading Area. Morgan Murdough designed the sign for the door. Our janitorial service Starlight Cleaning did a fabulous job putting a shine on the back stairs. The NEC art department restored the Soderstrom self-portrait and is working on cleaning the pictures of past Tucker Free Library benefactors which will then be returned to this room. Finally, Jerry Teal and Mike Boudreau of NH State Prison System – GraniteCor brought work crews in to modify shelving and built the beautiful furniture in this room as well as the benches in the stack room.

Together we created a thing of beauty! I welcome you to walk around the building and see all the improvements. Staff members will be in various areas so if you have any questions please ask. There are also two Guest Registers you may sign, one in the lower level and one on this floor. If you would like to stay for the NH Humanities Council Program we will make an announcement at 6:55 so you have a chance to make it back to your seats before the start of the program.

Welcome again. This evening marks the beginning of a new era in programming at the Tucker Free Library. With the recently completed renovations and construction of the Ann S. Soderstrom Media Center and Reading Area we have been able to remove many of the essential functions of a 21st Century library from this grand room. When built in 1903, the intention of the architect was to create a public gathering space and most likely saw this area as a place where members of the Henniker community would come together to share, learn, and enjoy cultural events. Before we begin I would like to invite everyone in the audience to return for additional programs: On October 9 we will host Treasure from the Isles of Shoals and on November 6th we will complete our programming year with the program "A Woman that Keeps Good Orders." Please check our website for additional details.

This year the theme for the Summer Reading Program is "Dig Into Reading" so I thought it would be cool to bring in a program with an archeological twist. Many of us have walked through fields, driven down wooded country roads and have seen a treasure trove of geological and man-made structures. This evening, Adair Mulligan is going to share with us her observations as they relate to the secret cellar holes that are evident throughout our area.

Adair Mulligan has a runaway curiosity about the natural and cultural history of northern New England. Author of *The Gunstock Parish, A History of Gilford, New Hampshire*, she has also contributed to *Proud to Live Here in the Connecticut River Valley*; *Where the Great River Rises, An Atlas of the Upper Connecticut River and Beyond the Notches: Stories of Place in New Hampshire's North Country*. Executive director of the Hanover Conservancy, she served for 20 years as Conservation Director of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions. Mulligan holds a master's degree from Smith College.