

## **Gafney Budget 2021**

### **An explanation of services during COVID-19**

To Accompany the 2021 Gafney Library Budget Submission

Dear Dino, Charlie, Mark and Ken:

I am writing this informational sheet for you to understand how the Gafney and its staff operated during the COVID-19 closure.

I'd like to start by saying how proud I am of the Gafney Staff and the manner in which they stepped up to the plate to continue the Gafney's community presence. Libraries are all about serving their communities, searching for ways to be inclusive and acting as a leveling space where everyone is treated equally. Having to close our physical doors to our community went against everything we had worked so hard to achieve but was necessary to keep staff and library members safe.

On Saturday March 14, 2020 at the close of work, staff gathered for a meeting to discuss how to address the rising COVID-19 problem and decided with the approval of the Board of Trustees to close the Gafney doors to the public. Even then we discussed how we might safely circulate items with the doors closed. We developed a program to package and circulate at-home projects for kids and adults and establish curbside delivery. Before we could make that happen, it was made clear to us from info gathered from the CDC and WHO and by the American Library Association, the NH Library Association and the Governor's Stay At Home order that we should close completely and not circulate anything.

Libraries are different from other businesses in that materials are circulated among many people and are stored in homes under various conditions. Unlike takeout food, the items come back to us and go out again. We were informed that because COVID-19 was so new and unlike any other corona virus, nobody knew how long the virus remained on various library surfaces.

Once the Gafney closed its doors on a bricks and mortar business the business model immediately began to turn to an online, virtual business. A decent analogy would be to relate the experience to a new business startup which I have done twice in my life before coming to work at the Gafney. This effort was very much the same but was achieved at the drop of a dime. The newly invented Gafney involved creating a virtual library business complete with constantly evolving content development, staffing issues, training, new technologies, realignment of budget expenses, marketing and tracking. We now marketed the Gafney as being open 24/7.

Gafney staff stepped up to the plate immediately and on March 16<sup>th</sup> the new business began to take shape. They worked remotely learning new technologies; developing the online experience and offering up suggestions on content through research, working with other NH librarians to compare and learn together; turning onsite programs into virtual where possible

and inventing others; learning to create videos; to stay on top of student needs through communication with the schools. They used their own supplies, laptops, printers, phones and internet. They made phone calls to the top 100 library users – checking in to let them know “we’re still here” and “remember to check us out on Facebook and the Gafney website”. They submitted weekly work logs, attended weekly staff meetings; connected with other community members to see how we could best help. Of course, there were many days of frustration due to technology snafus and information overload, but they persevered and together we worked it out. Lance MacLean became our technology guru and was and remains, indispensable.

Gafney literacy tutors began working remotely with students studying for the HiSET exam and the Gafney program remained one of the only ones operational in the State of NH. The NHDOE shut down all state funded adult ed programs. Fortunately, ours is Gafney run and funded by the Town so our students were not left in the lurch. Though the Gafney Testing Center (funded by the SAU) had to close due to the national testing center closure, our students would be ready to test when it reopened.

New Gafney services included upgraded internet and expanded wireless access. People are able to sit in the parking lot at the Garvin building in the comfort of their vehicle and use the internet 24/7. Virtual content included storytimes, original videos, software programs, constant updating and launching programs on Facebook and the website, and increasing numbers of options for downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, movies, magazines, comics, and tv shows; links to vendors offering free services during COVID-19; links to unemployment, federal grants and other COVID-19 related options popping up daily; daily NH Government updates; resources for students working from home; a new virtual summer reading program offered through the CARES Act via the NH State Library – check out our website at <http://www.gafneylibrary.org> for more.

Promoting the new business required constant PR in papers, radio, posters and using the help of the Friends of Wakefield Libraries to post around the towns of Wakefield and Brookfield. Paul School put us on their home page.

And in the midst of all the turmoil, we had to deal with lack of information about this new virus and were advised to wait on a national study being undertaken by IMLS/OCLC/Batelle Labs (<https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/realm-happening-now.html>). They would study the length of time the virus remained on various library related surfaces – plastic book covers, cloth covers, glossy children’s board books and magazines, inside book pages, and stacked books. The results trickled out in phases beginning in July and determined we could quarantine all items for a minimum of 72 hours (some 96 hours) and then circulate them safely. That allowed us to open the library for Gafney On The Go - a curbside pickup service. To date patrons are not allowed in the building due to space constraints. Curbside service is still the priority while quarantining storage takes up most of the space. Breaking ground for the new expansion this fall and an opening of the expansion next spring may help in that area!

By writing this explanation of services, I hope to address any questions that may arise about what was going on at the Gafney during the time of closure. Money within the 2020 budget was realigned to address the virtual business – more technology, software – but the payroll did not change. Gafney staff more than lived up to expectations and earned every penny they made during this period of uncertain times.

I welcome your questions/comments and may be reached by email at [beryl.donovan@gafneylibrary.org](mailto:beryl.donovan@gafneylibrary.org)

Thanks for “listening”!

Respectfully submitted,

Beryl Donovan, Library Director