

Libraries offer more than just books

Dear Editor:

When I arrived to work at the Whitehall Public Library, I was delighted to open an e-mail from one of our patrons who also happens to be a librarian at the University of Pittsburgh.

She informed me that the 2009 Hennen's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR) had been released and that Whitehall Library, receiving a score of 91 percent, ranked among the top 25 public libraries in the state.

Naturally this was wonderful news, but as exciting as these statistical results are, they reveal only one part of the library's story, for there is so very much more to what those numbers represent.

I felt compelled to share just one summer's day at our library.

During the morning, our loyal group of seniors gathered in the library's reading area, enjoying weekly Senior Coffee Time. Before leaving,

they were able to take advantage of a free blood pressure screening service that the library hosts monthly.

Across the hall, a group of children and adults created artwork under the tutelage of a professional artist. This special weekly program involves pairing each child with an adult that they do not know, providing them with the opportunity to get to know and work with each other while creating wonderful artwork.

That day, a school bus dropped off a large group of multi-national refugee children and their families from a local housing development.

The library, with support from the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, hosts a series of weekly library programs for these children, as well as providing library and computer instruction for the accompanying adults.

This is in addition to the patrons the staff checks out library mate-

rial to, and provides reference services for, including online students and people searching for employment.

As proud as I am of the Whitehall Public Library's story, every library has a story to tell. It is what we do and who we are, and if you believe in the value of public libraries then please do the following three things:

■ Use your library. We are here to serve in countless ways; take advantage of all that we can offer.

■ Support your library. We are feeling the effects of the economy in ways that could be potentially devastating. Join the Friends, become an active volunteer, we need you now more than ever.

■ Advocate for your library. Contact the governor and your legislators and ask that funding to public libraries be restored.

We thank you for your support.

Paula Kelly
Whitehall Public Library manager