

## Discover New Treasures in Your Library – Your Employees!

How can you get original art in your library, or conduct creative writing workshops for patrons, or get one-of-a-kind graphics created for your banners, posters and magnets – all being crafted by your employees? Are you taking full advantage of your staff's strengths and passions? Do you have an artist, a writer, a graphic artist, a musician, a scientist, or some other hidden expert working at your library?

Most libraries employ incredibly talented individuals, who can bring surprising ideas to life for you, even though that is not part of their daily job or why they were hired.

### CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

Do you come up with an idea and see if you have anyone to implement it or spearhead it?

**OR**, do you try and hire staff to fill exact needs at your library (beyond the basic duties of the job)?

**Are you thinking “outside the box”** when hiring your staff? Once staff is hired, do you take the time and effort to learn the strengths and skills of your employees so you can challenge them and give them work that utilizes their “other” skills and/or fosters that lifelong learning we want to encourage?

We all have talents and passions, and of course, as employees, we bring those with us to our jobs. As employers, are we harnessing some of these hidden or unknown (at least to us) skills or abilities?

- ◆ Do you have someone who should be your ARTIST IN RESIDENCE ?
- ◆ Should an employee be on the team to create or implement library displays?
- ◆ Is there an employee on staff who needs to be challenged or excited about their job, and you are willing to see what they can bring to the library's services, programs, or ???
- ◆ Who should be on the team that writes and edits/proofs the information being printed or sent out for the library?

The managers at the Big Rapids Community Library have been surprised by inadvertently hiring **an artist in residence**, whose work on an unplanned library project has been amazing! Should we try to always have an artist in residence? With most staff in our small libraries working part-time, you might discover someone who is hired as a library clerk but will handle the “artist” duties for your library. Most libraries have art in their buildings somewhere. Can you build on whatever you have now and make your library more beautiful and interesting by having a staff person create new work?

Libraries always have a need for arts and crafts for patrons of all ages, whether related to story time, programs or events, or for those library displays and decorations. Who is “crafty” on your staff who would love to give you ideas, or make the appropriate decorations, or come up with appropriate signage and images for an event or presentation? At our library, we pass on a “theme” to a staff person who loves to work on displays, and let them complete the project for us.

Marketing in all its myriad possible forms is a major focus for all libraries. When hiring for a library assistant, our new staff member just happens to have a drawing/illustrator background. No surprise: She takes our ideas and info for events and programs and creates the flyers, social media posts, website banners, etc. which give the library a better end product as well as freeing the “not-so-graphic-focused” staff person from stressing about making that poster and working with software with which they don't feel proficient.

**Examples of some of the work from the remarkable staff at the Big Rapids Community Library.** You really won't believe what has been created over the past year at our library. Please come and visit us!



We found out, or we were reminded, that one of our summer pages (high school student) was an artist. After some brainstorming on how we could take advantage of his skills, he was given the project of creating a timeline history of our library building, on the main stairway between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors (which includes a landing). Researching dates and providing a rough outline of possible significant events to include, was all the direction he was given. He created images to highlight some of those events. Since the timeline did not completely fill all the open walls, he then decided what he would like to add to that space.

You'll see classic and new books come to life on our stairway — and those creations might remind you that you never read that book, or might need to reread it?

Walking up to our 2<sup>nd</sup> floor now sparks conversations, makes people smile, and at the same time, provides information on our library building, which is over 110 years old.



## All these “characters” in our Audio Extravaganza now are wearing headphones!

One of our newly-hired library assistants happens to be a freelance illustrator. We did not post the job opening as a marketing position, but because of her creative talent, she has become our marketing guru. She is in charge of most of our posters, flyers, handouts, banners, displays, bookmarks, and logos. After being given basic info, descriptions, or ideas by the staff person responsible for that service or program., magic happens. Voila – we are presented with a few samples of her final ideas, which get edited and approved, and then she handles the printing, posting, etc.

Creating the artwork for our magnets, transforming our “audiobook extravaganza” using images from our hallway timeline, designing tokens that promote parenting reminders for young families, choosing the right symbol or characters to promote a program — just a few of the recently completed projects. Having such a talented staff person working on all of this definitely brings a higher quality marketing focus to our programs and services, which at the same time, allows staff members to focus on other projects and utilize their talents appropriately.

**Big Rapids Community Library, 231.796.5234, [bigrapids.lib.mi.us](http://bigrapids.lib.mi.us)**

