



From the desk of ...

JOE BARKER

■ *New Library*

It might be easier for me to just copy and paste last week's column and change a few words.

For the second straight week, I got the chance to tour a brand new facility that has been months in the making. For the second straight week, I was blown away.

Earlier this month it was the Beaufort Elementary renovations that impressed me. Last week it was the Scenic Regional Library's new Union branch.

Once again, the sheer amount of work just blew my mind. The library is a massive undertaking that impresses in every imaginable way.

It's crazy to me that the project is now (mostly) finished. When I took over as Union editor in April 2018, one of the first notes I got was about the groundbreaking ceremony for the new library.

I remember standing outside on a hot May morning and staring out into an empty space full of grass, dirt and trees. Scenic Regional Library Director Steve Campbell stood in front of the nothingness and described a major undertaking.

In just a few months, this space would be transformed he said. More parking, more room, more features. It was going to be the Union library everyone knew but bigger and better.

The blueprints looked nice, but I really wasn't sure what to expect. Eventually

the dirt started moving and a building rose from that empty field.

I watched with interest and wondered what the finished product was going to look like. I'll be honest, at first I wasn't impressed, mostly because I'm an idiot.

If you've seen the building, you know there's plenty of windows. The natural light is one of the coolest features of the library.

During construction, it wasn't quite clear there would be that many windows. For reasons that should have been obvious, they were mostly covered while crews kept working on the outside.

While the windows were hidden, I thought the building was pretty bland. Once I saw what the building actually looked like from the outside, I was intrigued.

At least once a week I drove over there to watch the construction progress and snap a few pictures. On one trip last month, I ran into Campbell in the parking lot. He invited me inside for a tour while they were putting the finishing touches on the library.

Campbell told me back at the groundbreaking that the whole thing was just bigger — more meeting rooms, more room for books, more parking spaces, more, more more. The first look really gave a glimpse of how that was going to happen.

The library was devoid of things like books and computers, so all I got to see was the massive scale of the

whole thing. The space was bigger than it seemed from the outside.

I think the key to the whole thing is the high ceilings. The meeting rooms are bigger, sure. There's three of them compared to one at the old branch. But with the high ceilings, they seem that much bigger.

Once I got that sneak peek, I was eager to see the whole thing come together. Tuesday evening, I got the chance.

Campbell led a tour for the Friends of the Library and it was just one of the most positive things I've been a part of. Everyone was blown away about the whole thing.

Every person I talked to kept saying how impressed they were. James Schwentker, the *Union Missourian's* ad rep, was there and we talked about just how nice everything was. He joked that he was going to stop coming into the office and was just going to work from the library instead. I said I'd join him — it just seemed so comfortable.

It was really cool the next day when it opened to the public and began filling with people. Watching the kids have a blast in the new children's area was a good sign that things were done right.

It's really cool to see something come from nothing. It's even cooler that I got to watch it the entire way during my tenure as the editor.

If you haven't been there, I implore you to check it out.

New Union Library Opening Wednesday

By Joe Barker
Union Missourian Editor

The new Scenic Regional Library is set to open to the public Wednesday, Aug. 21. The library is set to open to the public at 8 a.m.

The old Union branch has been closed since Friday, Aug. 9, in order to move to the new location. The new branch is located at 251 Union Plaza Drive near Pasta House and off Independence Drive. The new building is approximately 23,000 square feet — 17,200 square feet for the Union branch and 5,800 square feet for the administrative offices and bookmobile. The current size of the Union library is 7,000 square feet. The administrative offices are located in one half of the building. The rest is reserved for the library.

Three large rooms are on the west side of the building. The rooms feature dividers and could become one giant room, Campbell said.

Other meeting rooms exist on the eastern side of the library. Meeting space is expected to triple from what's currently offered. The facility will have a dedicated teen area, adult lounge • See Library Page 2U

LIBRARY

CONTINUED FROM 1U

with fireplace and café, three outdoor patios with seating, drive-up book drop, 1,900 square feet of public meeting space, three study rooms and other amenities.

The children's area will feature a giant touch-screen tablet, LEGO tables, magnet walls and other activities.

A self-check system will be installed at the branch in mid-September.

The Union location is the library's eighth new facility to be completed in the three-county area in the past 18 months.

The library will have all new furniture and amenities when it opens. One of those features is a bigger parking lot.

The new library will have 106 parking spaces, more than double at the current building.

The location for the new building was chosen after exploring several sites along the Highway 47 corridor, downtown, the library's current location and sites in the area of Prairie Dell/East Central College, east of its current location off Highway 50.

Total costs are expected to be between \$6 million to \$6.5 million. The project was made possible by the library's first-ever voter-approved tax increase in 2014.

Construction on the library started in the summer of 2018. A formal groundbreaking was held in May 2018.

The original goal was to have the library open in the spring of 2019, but that target was moved to June after construction started later than anticipated. The target was again moved back this spring.

Campbell said the winter was tough on the construction schedule. He said with the number of days lost to weather issues, the project was delayed at least a month.

The opening was pushed back into August after engineers reviewing the plans for the HVAC system decided to make a change. The plans call for a zone system where certain units control a certain number of areas. Campbell said the engineers decided to redo the zones in a way that was seen as more optimal.

New units had to be ordered meaning the earliest the project could finish was August.

Grand Opening

A grand opening event will be held Saturday, Sept. 14, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event will feature a bounce house, face painting, balloon artist, music and free hot dogs, popcorn, chips and soda.

There will be a dedication ceremony at 11:30 a.m. featuring guest speakers Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft, Missouri State Librarian Robin Westphal and Franklin County Presiding Commissioner Tim Brinker.

The Union Area Chamber of Commerce also will hold a ribbon cutting.

Missourian
August 21, 2019

Union Library Gets Edge Grant

■ *Secretary of State
Announced Thursday*

Missouri Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft announced Thursday that the Scenic Regional Library has been awarded a \$6,238 Edge Action Plan Grant.

The grant will be used to add a self-checkout station at the new Union branch of Scenic Regional Library to provide faster and independent access to the library's circulation, reader advisory and online registration services.

The new Union branch opened Aug. 21. The branch is located at 251 Union Plaza Drive near Pasta House and off Independence Drive.

"Our libraries are an invaluable resource to Missourians, offering public access to a wide array of materials and technology," Ashcroft

said. "These grants ensure libraries have the funds they need to offer quality technology-based services and programs to their patrons."

The Union branch plans to celebrate the end of construction with a grand opening ceremony Saturday, Sept. 14, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Ashcroft will be a guest speaker.

The event will feature a bounce house, face painting, balloon artist, music and free hot dogs, popcorn, chips and soda.

There will be a dedication ceremony at 11:30 a.m. featuring guest speakers. In addition to Ashcroft, Missouri State Librarian Robin Westphal and Frank-

• See Grant Page 2A

GRANT

CONTINUED FROM 1A

lin County Presiding Commissioner Tim Brinker will make remarks.

The Union Area Chamber of Commerce also will hold a ribbon cutting.

Edge is a nationally recognized tool that helps libraries evaluate their technology services based on a set of national technology benchmarks, giving them resources, recommendations

and ideas for strategic planning and community engagement.

The Edge Action Plan Grants provide funds to assist public libraries in completing goals they set from using Edge. Projects may address needs for new or expanded technology-based services or the replacement of outdated technology at the library, as identified through an Edge Assessment.

The Secretary of State's State Library has approved a total of 15 grant applications in the 2020 fiscal year, totaling \$158,934 in federal awards that the secretary's office has distributed to libraries throughout Missouri.

The grants are funded by the Library Services and Technology Act through the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Missourian September 7, 2019

Missourian
August 21, 2019

Reading to Rover

The new Union branch of the Scenic Regional Library will close out the month of August with Reading to Rover Thursday, Aug. 22. The event will run from 5 to 6 p.m. and give visitors a chance to practice their reading skills by reading to therapy dogs. For more information for any program, call 636-583-3224, stop by the branch, or visit scenicregional.org.

Missourian September 7, 2019



Quilting Lessons

Scenic Regional Library's Melissa Garber, right, showed off her quilting skills Thursday, Sept. 5. Garber, who has been quilting for 14 years, taught a class on quilting at the new Union branch. Students learned the basics. The group is working on making a quilt that will eventually be donated to Grace's Place Crisis Nursery. Watching Garber quilt is Aubree Wissman.

Missourian Photo/Joe Barker.

