



PHOTOS BY DAVE WARNER

## Library district reports major increases in services, items checked out across system

BY BUCK COLLIER  
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HERMANN — Gasconade County Commissioners on Oct. 17 lauded the efforts of Scenic Regional Library officials to boost use of the district's nine branches — efforts that are supported by increasingly impressive numbers.

In presenting the district's annual report to the Commission, Scenic Executive Director Steven Campbell noted the number of adults taking part in the programs offered at the various branches has increased 15 percent in the last four years.

Major increases have been posted in the past year in the number of print products and electronic products being checked out at the branches: 566,368 of printed items in 2018-19, an 18-percent jump from 2017-18; and 130,582

19, compared with 31,080 printed materials checked out by Hermann branch patrons. Campbell attributed the difference to Hermann having an older population — which tends to check out fewer books and other materials per visit than do younger readers — and fewer young people using the library in the county seat town.

The district's annual report contained some surprises for the commissioners:

- Some non-traditional library items are available for checkout, including telescopes, fishing poles and cake pans.

- Staff at all nine branches have been trained to process passports. The district now has 46 staff members qualified to process passports. In the past year, the branches processed 287 passports, a 43-percent increase from the previous year.

number deals with patrons bringing their digital devices to the library to connect to the Internet: 59,482, which represents a 183-percent increase. Campbell said that level of use is an indication of the number of students who do not have Internet access where they live and who use the wireless connection available through the branches for school work.

Campbell said this is an area of emphasis by Scenic officials.

"We're constantly working to upgrade our line speed," he told the Commission.

The district is governed by a 13-member board — four members each from Gasconade, Franklin and Warren counties and one member from Crawford County. Crawford County was allotted a seat on the board when the district took in West Sullivan, which lies in Crawford



**OWNSVILLE SCENIC** Regional Library's librarian Robin Schaefferkoetter (at computer, top, left) and Sarah Miller, who conducts story time programs, discuss upcoming events and new programs at the facility. **A SELF-CHECKOUT** kiosk (center, above) is among the new pieces of equipment available to patrons who order items from other facilities. Fishing poles are also available for borrowing. **DYLAN EMKE** (top, right) reads a book on plants during a library visit Thursday after school with his father, Justin, and sister, Molly. They visit the library regularly. **A COLLECTION** of books about survival skills (above, on left) are on display this month to promote the theme which includes an entryway display. **TEENS USE** computers after school (above, on right). **ONA MOUNCE**, a freshman in high school (below), said she enjoys all the books and "hanging out with some of my friends" during her frequent visits to the library.

