

Group pursues library branch in Marthasville

Met with representatives from Scenic Regional

By Cindy Gladden
CORRESPONDENT

A committee of Marthasville-area residents committed to seeing a library in Marthasville met with the Scenic Regional Library's Board of Directors on Oct. 19 to appeal for a local branch.

Committee members, comprised of retired educators and community leaders, believe the time has come to benefit directly from library tax dollars paid by people in a 100-square-mile area of southern Warren County.

Members of the committee say representatives from the Scenic Regional Library system encouraged area taxpayers to vote yes for a tax increase proposed in 2014, saying there was a good chance Marthasville would get its own library.

Don Deeker, retired pastor and a member of the committee, said he took that information to heart.

"Even though I probably would have voted for it anyway, I then encouraged others to vote to pass the tax. It's time to benefit from our tax dollars," Deeker said.

Mayor David Lange said he believes Marthasville and southern Warren County needs to be at the "top of the list" for a library branch.

"We are a growing community," said Lange. "We are ~~looking to get a commitment~~ that we will get a branch."

There are nine branches in the surrounding area serving Franklin, Gasconade and Warren counties, including locations in Hermann, New Haven, Owensville, Pacific, St. Clair, Sullivan, Union, Warrenton and Wright City.

Angie Hilbert, chairman for the committee, said they can offer a unique way to help the library system get started in Marthasville. The Rusche Park Board in Marthasville manages property given to them by the estate of Helen



COMMUNITY LIBRARY — Residents of Marthasville are pushing to get a local branch of the Scenic Regional Library. Pictured here is a view of the interior of the library in Wright City, showing what can be offered in a smaller community. Adam Rollins photo.

LIBRARY

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Rusche. Her vision and wishes included using the designated property for a museum and library.

The museum exists as the Grabs Museum along Highway D in Marthasville. Separate lots in the park, which could be sold to the library district at an affordable cost, are directly across the street from the museum. The location would be central to the residents and within walking distance of Marthasville Elementary School.

"It's our time," said Hilbert. "We approached them in 2017 and they didn't have the money for it. We are trying again."

Committee member

Diane Freese attended the meeting with the board and said Scenic Regional representatives were receptive to the request, but reported money was not available at this time, that they were "bonded out."

The library district suggested that a library kiosk, essentially a vending machine for books, might be a good alternative that they are researching at this time. But committee members aren't interested in this idea.

"A kiosk machine can't have story time for the kids, or free Wi-Fi, or study rooms or meeting rooms," said Mayor Lange.

"It's about community," Hilbert said. "Having a library can help make our community stronger."

Hilbert said they are

looking for a physical library location where programs, meeting rooms, activities for children and community gatherings might be possible. She said it would be similar to a story hour program recently begun at the local Charrette Baptist Church.

"We're not looking for a branch just for the city of Marthasville," said Lange. "We're looking for a branch for the whole 63357 zip code. The population of Marthasville is 1,200, but there are 5,500 people in our zip code area."

Hilbert said the committee will continue discussing the outcome of the meeting with the library district and make plans for the next step in bringing a Scenic Regional Library branch to the Marthasville area.