

Library Needs Big Bucks To Build Children's Wing

H.B. Independent
By Melinda Keller
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With a wing and plenty of prayers, officials at the Huntington Beach Central Library hope one day they will be able to efficiently serve the needs of the community's children.

But until that day comes, the children, who equal more than one-third of the library's patrons, will be confined to two study tables crammed in a small book-lined area, hidden on the bottom floor of the library.

Library Director Ron Hayden envisions the proposed two-level wing to house a storytelling area,

personal computers, study cubicles, a reading clinic and a museum/gallery for the 40,000 card carrying members 12 and under.

But that vision may fade if library supporters are not able to raise the \$2.8 million needed to construct the wing. Although the City Council allocated \$1.35 million for the children's wing late last year, recent fundraising efforts have only netted a fraction of the cost.

Hayden said that although donations are trickling in at a slow

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pace, he is much more optimistic about the fate of the expansion than in the past.

"I used to have doubts that we would ever raise the money to get this wing built, at least now I think it will be built in my lifetime."

During Hayden's 17-year stint as a library employee, two of which have been as director, the number of library patrons has increased dramatically.

When the Central Library first opened its doors in 1975, Huntington Beach had a population of 148,000. Although the population only increased 25 percent in 10 years, the amount of materials patrons checked out doubled.

A study compiled by HBW Associates supports Hayden's claims.

The consultant firm, hired by council, cited the Huntington Beach Central Library as one of the most used and best managed libraries in the nation. The study only found fault with two areas: the children's area and parking.

The consultants suggested a 20,000 square-foot children's area expansion and a \$1.15 million parking improvement project be implemented.

Volunteers from the three li-

brary support groups; the Library Patrons Foundation, Friends of the Library and Friends of the Children's Library, have been working to raise funds for the suggested projects and have earned more than \$12,000 in the last two months.

A Valentine's Day fundraiser, which featured food and drink from local restaurateurs, brought in \$6,000. The third annual event that was held on Feb. 7 enabled the 600 guests, who paid a \$25 donation, to sample wine, sweets and main dishes from 25 Huntington Beach res-

taurants and delicatessens.

Another donation drive sponsored by library volunteers was just as successful.

A letter pleading the plight of the children's wing was sent out in the December and January water bills, and residents have responded by donating \$7,000. Other money-making functions, such as a classic car show and a walk-a-thon scheduled for mid-June, are still in the planning stages.

The latest fund-raising plan, again engineered by volunteers, may hold the most promise.

Residents and non-residents alike are being asked to donate at least \$25 to the wing. In return, the donor's name will be inscribed on a small bronze plaque that will be hung on a wall near the front desk.

Local companies are also helping with the drive. McDonnell Douglas recently donated \$10,000 for drug and alcohol prevention materials.

"We're investing time and money in enhancing our future community leaders; hopefully we can soon stop playing catch up," Hayden said.

