

From one hand to another Briceville Library is moved

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More than 100 volunteers from across the county converged upon Briceville Saturday morning, Aug. 25, to participate in a ceremonial "human-chain," signifying the comprehensive community response that's encompassed a six-year effort to establish a new public library in the isolated mountain community.

The new library's grand opening is tentatively scheduled for Friday, Sept. 13.

The library is moving from its cramped 420-square foot space in the Briceville Friend-

ship Center at 921 Andy's Ridge Road into a modern 2,000 square-foot building at 111 Slatestone Road. According to Briceville Library Director Daphne Windham, the distance from the old library to the new library is exactly 500 steps.

Though there is indeed reason to celebrate, Windham cautions that there remains much work to do.

"I pretty much stay busy all day, every day trying to get everything taken care of," said the new Library Director.

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More than 100 individuals lined up Saturday morning, Aug. 24, to participate in a symbolic "Human Chain" stretching from the Briceville Friendship Center to the newly constructed Briceville Public Library. The volunteers stood at an arms-length and systematically passed books from the old library to the new one. — Daphne Windham

Hand

from 1A

"There's just so much to do it feels like you never get caught up, but it is a great feeling finally getting to move in. Everyone in the community seems very excited about the move. I know I am."

Windham stated this week that there are actually more than 4,000 library items - including books, magazines, DVDs, and various other materials - that must eventually be relocated. Saturday's event, however, was more of a tribute to individuals like Marshall Hackworth and Lynette Seeber who have banded together with other community leaders over the past six years to turn the dream of a new Briceville library into a reality.

Hackworth is the Briceville Library Building Committee Chairman and a former member of the county's library board. He told the Courier-News last year that he actually committed himself to this project several years ago.

Hackworth explained in the interview that the library board formerly held monthly meetings on a rotating basis at different libraries around the county. He said every time they went to Briceville he always left the meeting feeling guilty that the county could not provide that community a better library.

"I used to always leave those meetings feeling horrible that we couldn't do more as a county," recalled Hackworth. "I would tell my wife after the meetings that I was going to try to do something about it whether anyone else would or not."

Hackworth worked with several other community leaders and county officials over the years to finally get the wheels spinning on the project. Grants were secured and donations were accepted until finally, after a couple frustrating setbacks, sufficient money was raised to make the project happen.

During the course of his fundraising efforts Hackworth gained a great respect for the Briceville Community.

"Those are some of the best people you'd ever want to meet," Hackworth stated in a 2012 interview about the project. "The people in that community are the ones who deserve the credit for making this happen the way it did."

The library's total price tag, including everything from bricks and mortar, to book shelves to children's furniture, is around \$400,000.

When Hackworth humbly credits for making it happen, Seeber is likely one of those individuals he speaks of.

The library's former long-time director, Seeber retired earlier this year due to health concerns. For several years Seeber was the face of the Briceville Library, working to transform the cramped makeshift office space at the Friendship Center into a viable and even thriving library that oftentimes doubled as the community's social hub. Seeber always made sure that residents of the area without a home computer had access to library computers for personal business and, especially, for students doing school work.

Windham credits her mentor for keeping the project alive even when no one else thought anything would ever come of it.

"She's done so much," Windham stated. "It was great to see her here Saturday to witness the human chain. This means so much to her."

Windham remarked this summer that she'd like to see some kind of permanent dedication to Seeber at the library.

"If it were up to me I'd put her name on the building," said the new Briceville Library Director.

Dist. 4 Commissioner Tim Isbel was one of multiple local dignitaries who attended Saturday's event to take part in the "Human Chain."

He was impressed to see folks from all corners of the county take up a link of the chain.

"Saturday was just a great outpouring of support," said Isbel. "It was touching to see everyone come out to be a part of the chain."

"It wasn't just folks from Briceville there; I talked to people from Norris. Clinton, Oak Ridge, and really just people from all over the county," Isbel added.

Besides Isbel, other officials in attendance were State Representative John Ragan and Anderson County Property Assessor Johnny Alley. Commission Chairman Chuck Fritts (Dist. 1) was away with his wife, Debbie, celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary, but the commissioner's sister attended the event on his behalf.

A smaller version of the "Human-Chain" was formed Friday afternoon as Briceville Elementary School students lined up to pass children's books from the elementary school next door to the new library.