

Dear Editor,

My name is Bethany Puls and I am writing this letter on behalf of the Northwest Regional Library in Lee County. I have been a patron of our library system for over 20 years, and an employee for over four years. This beautiful library is where I currently work and am writing to emphasize the importance of public libraries and to ask you to spread the word about the wonderful benefits this library provides the public. This letter is to highlight what the public library provides and why it should continue to be funded. The library is a safe space that was built to meet the needs of our communities. A recent count shows that over 294,000 Lee County residents are registered users of the library. The Northwest Regional Library offers a plethora of resources including a variety of materials. Our library system has over 1.5 million items available for patrons to use or check out and we circulate about 6 million items per year. We provide materials including books, DVDs, CDs, launchpads, speaking books, and games. Besides physical materials, we offer many digital resources so patrons can listen to audiobooks, read ebooks, watch TV and movies, and read magazines.

The Northwest Regional branch provides the surrounding community public computers, print and scan capabilities, Wi-Fi, study rooms, and meeting rooms. We provide programs for patrons of all ages. From download drop-ins to book discussions, we want our adult patrons to have a place to go where they can relax or even learn something new. Our teens have programs including trivia nights, bunny yoga, and art activities of many kinds. We offer Toddler Tales and Preschool story time during the school year. Our Family story time is a huge hit, and we have had visitors such as the Lee County Sheriff's department and their ice cream truck, the firefighters, the Parks and Recreation pool

servers, and the park rangers all come and help our patrons learn about Lee County. For our littlest patrons, we have baby rhyme time. It's a wonderful time to sing, read, and rhyme with the babies, as well as letting both the babies and grown-ups socialize and build community. It's so important for our community to have a space where they don't have to spend money or give anything, but can instead consume things and experiences freely.

By writing this letter, I hope I can convey the benefits the Northwest Regional Library and the Lee County Library System provides our community. In giving funding to this system, we can continue to provide these resources to our patrons and continue to add to both our physical and digital collections. We take great pride in what we do and our beautiful library is a success story of the positivity the local library can have in a community.