

# Building for the future

Story and photos by Jack Ruskin

Thursday, October 7, 2010 “The Valley Mirror”

In year's gone by, when the high-tech items such as cell phones, computers, and plasma screen televisions were only a dream, many people visited their neighborhood library to have access to great books, newspapers and magazines, and a few social events such as club meetings.

The Carnegie Library of Homestead (CloH) has a storied history with its swimming pool that was the training ground for an Olympic Medalist, and a Music Hall that featured many well-known speakers and entertainers from a different era.

Housed in a magnificent building along Tenth Avenue, CLOH has lead been undergoing a unique transformation over the past few years, uncovering much of its interior greatness that was boarded over and hidden for several decades.

The current Board of Directors, lead by businessman/councilman Dan Lloyd, has helped guide the reconstruction of the building to keep pace with society; suggest services the library can offer the public; and to have a vision for years to come.

“One of our main projects in the past year has been the installation of an elevator providing access to our lower level for use of the swimming pool, and the upper level with the gymnasium, health fitness and weight rooms, as well as a few other areas that are currently under development,” Dan remarked.

He explained that as with any enterprise, funding is important, but in an effort to save on expenses, the board, which meets almost every Friday, has been able to call upon skilled volunteers to help with project such as painting, minor mechanical needs, and some design work. He explained that having such meetings and talking to other people has reduced expenditures by as much as 30 percent.

“One of our goals is to seek help from the public. Renovations that are costly will have to be funded by foundations, companies and organizations that can see what we are doing and believe in our goals, but small “visions” will be dependent upon the average citizen.” Dan continued.

Library visitors who climb the stairs near the front entrance have always been greeted by a wall as they reached the second floor. Most individuals weren't aware of the usable space that is currently under construction to house “Aunt B's Coffee Shop.”

“The idea was presented to my aunt Betty Lloyd, and after a while she told me she was able to come up with the necessary money to help us complete the project. Here is just a regular citizen who believes in what this library is and can be, and she has given us approximately \$10,000.

When people see our vision, we hope they will also be willing to make donations and monetary gifts for the continued growth of CloH.” Dan continued.

Another major project is to convert the main desk area on the first floor into a Welcome Center.

“This library services a large number of diverse groups, and just like a hotel needs a central meet and greet information station, CloH should have a place that can direct people to the various sections of this facility. We have taken down some of the wall material and uncovered windows that were a part of the Library’s original charm. We intend to install a large digital screen over the new circulation desk that is being modeled after the original construction of 100 years ago,” Dan continued.

Dan outlined another new project, which is to establish a “Teen Room” that will meet the demands of youth in that age bracket.

He added that the music hall has also been a positive element of the facility allowing people who travel from great distances for entertainment to discover the great aspects of the library.

“This Library has been stable for some time now, and we have areas that are constantly on the upswing. Book circulation has grown by more than 20 percent. The remodeled Children’s section is always in demand, and when it opened only had two computers, but now has six, and that isn’t enough. Computers are what people are using, so that is why we opened the computer room a year and a half ago,” he mentioned.

Dan said that in addition to musical performances, the music hall would soon present live stage productions/plays.

He concluded by stressing that while many libraries are feeling the economic crunch and cutting back on hours, CloH is looking to the future to provide the public with a centralized location where they can have access to literature, athletic activities, entertainment, social activities, and a place to hold meetings for groups of all sizes.