

Libraries Provide — Countywide!

The old and the new...

By Heather Estrada

For Go! Eastern Oregon

WESTON — For the past 70 years, the Weston Public Library has known only two library directors. In a town grounded in its western history, and its commitment to tracing the roots of those who came to the area to settle in the 1800s, this story fits perfectly into the narrative.

As of the beginning of 2024, the library has a new director, Heather Culley. But, as with the previous two, the new director comes to the job with a family history based in the city of Weston that dates to her great-great-grandparents.

Appropriate for the small-town library so committed to historical preservation.

Culley may be new to the Weston library, but she is not new to libraries. She's a familiar face around the county, as she's been employed at the Pendleton Public Library for 26 years, and before that, she worked four years in the library at Whitman University in Walla Walla.

She started working in libraries as a book shelper and worked in libraries for 18 years before she decided to officially make it her career. To accomplish that



Culley

task, she went back to school to get her master's degree in library science.

She has spent much of her recent years cataloging for the Pendleton library and recently achieved the status of Cat 1 in the Sage Library system. The designation is no small feat, as there are only 12 in the entire Sage System, which includes 77 libraries across 15 Eastern Oregon counties.

When I had the chance to chat with Heather a few weeks into her role as the newly minted library director, she expressed how excited she is to be able to walk to work, to take on the role of

maintaining this important community space and getting her fingers into all the history. The library is a steward of photos, old yearbooks, old records of farms and county transactions.

She is excited to work where she lives and to be a more integral part of the community. She also shared with me her love of libraries.

She's stayed in libraries for 30 years because it's a career that changes all the time. The day-by-day tasks are extremely varied, and the entire profession continues to evolve at an ever-increasing rate. She remembers the days of card catalogs. While librarians were always up to the task of getting patrons accurate and relevant answers, now it's in a much timelier fashion. The internet has broadened the scope of the work, not eliminated the need for them as some naysayers predicted.

As Culley begins her first year in this historic space, she intends to maintain the status quo while learning the various aspects of her new position. She looks forward to holding on to the historic look and value while looking for ways to modernize the Weston Public Library without losing the beauty of the past.

Also, she has a host of activities planned for February as well as plans for the spring. On Feb. 22, join the Novel Readers, who are reading "Spanish Daughter" by Lorena Hughes. The well-established book club is always happy to welcome new members.

Culley will continue the long running preschool story times on Fridays at 10:30 a.m. Also, she is starting a knitting group on Tuesdays at 5 p.m., which is open to all. Come for help on a current knitting project, to learn or to be social.

Finally, an adult education program, "Plan Your Garden" is Feb. 21 at 4 p.m. The library will provide pencils, planners and advice as well as access to seed catalogs and a computer to order. It provides an opportunity to brainstorm with other gardeners and get advice from those with experience before spring.

With lots going on, February is a great month to stop by for an activity or to introduce yourself to Culley. She is excited about meeting people.

There are 12 libraries that partner with the Umatilla County Special Library District. If Weston isn't close, find the nearest one and stop by. Visit www.ucslid.org to find links to all 12 libraries.



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