



Chris Danou's Capitol Report
Let's Celebrate Our Local Libraries this Week

Lots of things go into making a community a great place to work, live and raise a family. One thing that's common whether people live in a heavily populated urban area, a suburb or rural community is the library.

When my wife and I decided to settle and raise our boys in Trempealeau, we knew the library would be a central spot for us to spend our time together, as well as a place for our boys to learn and have access to great programs and services. We really are fortunate to have such a great community resource down the street from our home.

This week is especially important for libraries because we are celebrating National Library Week, a national observance sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and community libraries across Wisconsin and the country. National Library Week began in 1958 and each year has a different theme that highlights all the things that are part of the library experience.

This year's theme for National Library Week is "Libraries Transform." It's designed to increase public awareness of the value, impact and services provided by libraries and library professionals, as well as showcasing the transformative nature of today's libraries, and elevating the critical role libraries play in the digital age. Even in the digital age, libraries continue to adapt and evolve, just like they did during the technological advances of the 1950's.

National Library Week was developed as a public awareness campaign to get people back to the library. In the mid-1950's, research showed Americans were spending less money on books and more on radios and televisions. Concerned that Americans were reading less, the ALA and the American Book Publishers formed a nonprofit citizen organization called the National Book Committee in 1954. Its purpose was to encourage people to read in their leisure time to improve incomes and health, and to develop a strong and happy family life. They have been building on these efforts ever since and introducing new generations to the library.

Naturally, books come to mind when people think about the library. While the most common reason for people to go to the library are for books, it really is so much more than just a place to borrow a good book these days. The range of material has expanded significantly, and now books are categorized and found electronically by searching a computer database. People can also borrow CDs, DVDs, books on CD, e-books, and have access to the internet and technological items like computers, laptops and iPads. Libraries are great places for people and groups to reserve space and hold community meetings and other activities. There's also programming options, events and classes for people of all ages that bring people together at the library. Indeed, it's perhaps fair to say there's something for everyone at the library.

Be sure to take a moment and thank the dedicated staff at your community library this week. They work hard to make the library a centerpiece of our community and that the library truly is a place for everyone. Please join me in celebrating our community libraries for National Library Week!

