



490 East Grand Avenue
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
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www.mcmillanlibrary.org

Executive Summary

McMillan Memorial Library is the municipal library of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. It was founded in 1890 as the T.B. Scott Free Library of Grand Rapids. The city changed its name in 1920 and the library was renamed when the current building was constructed in 1970. Our municipal population is 18,367 and our service population is 38,634.

McMillan has a long history of building community in South Wood County. We served as an incubator for community organizations (Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre, Arts Council of South Wood County, Wisconsin Rapids Community Media) and area libraries (Arpin, Vesper). We have championed the public library as a community building organization, producing two books, several articles and numerous presentations on the centrality of that role.

McMillan's recent emphasis on community engagement was prompted by a local economic downturn in 2000. In response, we surveyed local needs and crafted a new Plan of Service, revising our mission to *Strengthening our community through lifelong learning*. Guided by local surveys and national reports, the most recent Plan of Service (2015-2020) focuses on supporting literacy and learning through all stages of life, community building, the public library as a hub for content creation, providing dynamic youth services, and reaching residents who are underserved or unable to access our resources. A plan with clear metrics got us underway.

We remodeled an aging building into a community hub, with a social Commons, "hands-on" Youth Services room, coffeehouse, performance space / theater, makerspace, podcast studio and environmental learning center / Monarch Waystation. The Library Board took a leadership position by implementing a 235 kW solar roof top. We are reprogramming the Adult Room for coworking and an expanded makerspace. Our facility builds on our strengths and is tailored to community needs.

McMillan's services have pivoted to become more explicitly educational and cultural, while letting our partners participate in developing programming. Some events respond to their expressed needs. Others provide a library component to a larger community initiative. Legacy services are evaluated in light of the new priorities. Community engagement guides our program.

Our staff are focused on "outward-facing" tasks - embedding themselves in community organizations. There they facilitate discussion, provide support, and build partnerships. They are encouraged to solve problems and innovate. For example, in response to a long expressed need, McMillan created an easily updated community calendar. As local news disappeared from the newspaper, we started a podcast to promote community conversation. When Consolidated Papers was sold, we digitized forty years of their company newsletters, protecting the community's history. When the community faces problems, our staff is on hand to be part of the solution.

McMillan deserves consideration for this honor, not only because of the breadth and depth of its programs, but because it can serve as a template for community engagement. Our process is straightforward and can be replicated. We have demonstrated how a small town library can and must transform itself to best serve its community.

Narrative

1. Throughout the 20th century, local employment was dominated by the paper industry. The locally owned mills were, by far, the largest employers in the area, offering wages which provided their employees a comfortable living. In the early 2000s the international downturn in the industry led to the sale of the largest employer in Wisconsin Rapids and a reduction in their workforce. The change in ownership meant Wisconsin Rapids was no longer the company's headquarters, which led to an out migration of professionals as many of the "white collar" positions at the local mill were eliminated. Other mills in the area closed permanently. This economic downturn in the community led to higher unemployment and underemployment. This crisis directly impacted the library's funding and led to a 20% reduction in library staffing.

Today the community has stabilized but still struggles to create opportunity for its people. While the local community is predominantly white, there are sizable Hmong and Native American communities in our service area who face the same socioeconomic hurdles as minorities in more urban areas. McMillan has worked directly with and programmed for both these communities. The median household income in Wisconsin Rapids is \$37,180 almost \$20,000 below the state median of \$56,811. According to data gathered by the United Way of Wisconsin, 52% of the Wisconsin Rapids populations falls into their ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed) qualification. ALICE defines families who work hard and earn above the federal poverty level, but can't afford a basic household budget.

McMillan works closely with community leaders and its participation in community research guides our program. As a data collection hub for both the Incourage Foundation's *Vital Signs* survey and *Gaining and Maintaining Young People in Wisconsin Communities*, we were able to discern areas where the Library should target its efforts. In addition, members of our management team serve on United Way Coalitions on hunger, literacy and youth development. Our Library Director is a member of the Wood County Drug Task Force and a board member of the South Wood County Historical Museum. Our Assistant Director works with the local Department of Workforce Development and Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber named us their 2014 Non-Profit of the Year. We have developed close ties with our local public and private schools. The Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools named us their 2017 Friend of Education.

The needs of our community are the basis of our 2015-2020 Plan of Service. One of the top priorities is to strengthen and expand our relationships with local organizations and co-program with them to meet the needs of the community. Traditional lending services are still in heavy use. Our efforts as a content creation hub have a special focus on skill building for employment and entrepreneurship. Service models have changed to recognize the needs of new populations entering the community. We have also changed policies to make access easier for income constrained patrons. To this end, we have recently reviewed patron records and expunged fines and fees from many patron accounts. Our children's materials are fine free and we work with our patrons to ensure needed access to materials.

2. The common theme of all of our community needs is access to opportunity. This includes learning opportunities in everything from reading literacy to technology and information literacies. Opportunities to express one's self or engage with the larger culture are emphasized. At its base, it is the opportunity to change one's life situation. The relative small size of the city means the network of service providers, both governmental and non-profit, is much smaller than it would be in a larger city. This makes strong partnerships among agencies more important and permits McMillan to have an outsized impact on our community. We are committed to a robust programming suite and have developed both expertise and community support for it. Finally this multichannel effort allows us to reach more of our community members than any agency would be able to if they limited their reach to their own "silos."

McMillan's literacy programs begin at birth with programs like: Reach Out and Read with Aspirus Healthcare and the United Way; One Thousand Before K, encouraging our patrons to read 1000 books to their children before they begin school; and story time programs for age groups starting with infant lap-sits. Our summer library program encourages summer reading across all age groups, from preschoolers to adults. During the summer, we also partner with the Boys and Girls Club and the USDA to provide free lunches to youth in the community.

Literacy is obviously an important base but we aim to generate a love of learning in our youth. This results in diverse programming which includes STEAM learning programs, ukulele classes, Pokemon league, stop motion instruction, brick builders club (LEGO), family dance party, International Tabletop Gaming Day and participation in the local children's festival to name a few. For our teens we offer songwriting workshops, karaoke, talent shows, battle of the bands, trivia contests, hip hop classes, photography instruction, coding classes and board game creation. We originated a teen job fair, now run with four partnering organizations. While our team works exhaustively to deliver programming, it is within the context of a larger community effort. We utilize local expertise to provide the best results possible. For example, a local professional studio photographer taught photography and video editing, the head of the local community television channel led videography courses and a Sony label artist from our concert series presented this summer's song writing class.

Like most libraries we offer access to computers for informal learning and the completion of applications and resumes, but we go further. Education and skill development can be significant barriers to people trying to change the direction of their lives. To assist our patrons in developing their work skills, we have offered in instructor-led online courses to our patrons since March 2016. Almost 1,200 of these free courses have been taken, with our patrons spending almost 14,000 hours in class time.

McMillan coordinates with Mid-State Technical College to deliver on the career needs in our community. This includes helping teach competitive intelligence / research skills to future entrepreneurs, as well as tapping their staff as instructors. For example, this year we partnered with them to facilitate a post incarceration small business training program.

Technology can be a great equalizer when it comes to gathering information, developing new skills and in the expression of ideas. We leverage legacy and cutting edge technology to meet the needs of our patrons. Our library makerspace allows people to learn new skills, explore artistic interests, and even prototype new products. The space is responsive to the needs of our community members and new purchases are based on how the space is being utilized and what items have been requested. The community building aspect of the space has led to the formation of a local "Makers" group which develops and delivers projects into the community. Their current projects are a process to modernize handicap access symbols throughout the city and the construction of an outdoor oven for public use. We have also received grant and foundation funding to develop and deploy mobile STEAM education kits for community organizations and schools. These kits will allow access to free state of the art tools and curriculum, saving individual organizations from replicating expensive equipment. These kits include laptop computers, coding kits, robotics, virtual reality sets, a stop motion animation studio and a portable sound recording studio.

The cultural life of a community is an important indicator of its overall vitality. McMillan promotes local artists and musicians as a means of building community. We are home to the Cowboy Union Jam, a group of 15-20 musicians who gather monthly to share their music with the community, and 4 on the Floor, a similar jazz combo. Our makerspace is used by local musicians to create audio and video recordings. We host art displays, including an annual elementary / junior high / high school exhibit. Local crafters gather here for instruction, group projects and camaraderie. We hold National Novel Writing Month events. Our author series

focuses on local and regional writers. Our performance space hosts events by the Very Special Arts Choir, Central Wisconsin Choristers, area Suzuki students and local day cares, as well as plays by a home school group and recitals by local music students. Staff operate family (parent / child), teen, off-site and cooking book clubs. Our local history collection (hosted at Recollection Wisconsin and indexed by the DPLA) is an award-winning resource. It includes oral histories collected by our staff in our studio.

We also provide access to the wider culture to enrich the community. Our movie series features documentaries, foreign language films and limited release titles. We do a closed captioned showing in the afternoon to better serve our senior and hearing-impaired patrons, as well as an evening showing. Average attendance was 68 per showing in 2017. On several occasions, we have had the producer / director of a film available live / Skype for the audience. Our films series has included an outdoor showing at a county park. McMillan is one of three libraries in the country showing National Theatre Live plays and does so without charge. Family Fun Night regularly includes musicians, storytellers and other children's performers. Sponsorship by the Mead Witter Foundation and the Endowment fund concerts featuring regional (Monteverdi Chorale, Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra ensembles) and national artists (Peter Yarrow, BeauSoleil).

Our library has truly woven itself into the culture and daily life of our community. These programs are attended by hundreds of patrons each week and, like so much of our programming, is a partner driven process. Our partners are as varied as the programs including; the University of Wisconsin Extension; Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre; the Ho-Chunk Nation; Wood County Drug Task Force; Wood County Parks and Forestry Department; Wood County Health Department; the Wisconsin Rapids Family Center (domestic abuse shelter); ARTiGras arts festival; Arts Council of South Wood County; Mayor's Council on Sustainability; South Wood County Historical Museum; Wisconsin ARES-RACES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service); VSA Wisconsin; Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Festival and the school district.

The facility is an important community asset. The Commons provides a "living room" for the community, complete with a staff-run coffeehouse. The Fine Arts Center seats 265 and is fully equipped for concerts, movies and speakers. The Youth Services Room and the attached garden incorporate many aspects of a children's museum. The All Purpose Room and Lower Lobby are designed for art displays. A podcast studio highlights community accomplishments, while doubling as a recording studio for aspiring musicians. Our support for coworking is crucial in a city too small to attract a commercial option. Our outreach and facilities make us the community hub for discussing community issues like the opioid crisis, human trafficking, environmental issues, education and the financial stability of our community. These features are the fruit of years of remodeling and conscious design.

Former director Ron McCabe wrote about the impact of the public library as a democratizing force in the community in his *Civic Librarianship* (Scarecrow), a theme reiterated by current Director Andy Barnett in his *Libraries, Community and Technology* (McFarland). Historically this referred to the access to information found in libraries. In our programming and services we have extended this to include access to technology, tools, public space, materials and, most importantly, the field expertise of our local community members. For a community of our size, it is amazing how much diversity of interests there is. To our benefit, this means we have a wealth of expertise in the community we can tap as a "living collection." Through our programming and outreach we have illustrated how important the public library is to the community as a partner, host, community gathering place and learning center.

3. It is essential that a public library be responsive to the needs of the community. To accomplish this, we rely heavily on our partners with specialized expertise to guide us, but we utilize many other metrics to evaluate our effectiveness and direction. The library has conducted

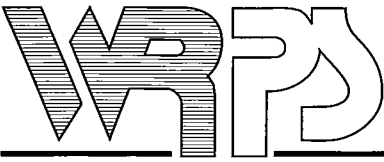
numerous surveys over the years to develop qualitative data on how we are delivering on goals. We collect quantitative statistics on programs including attendance and base demographic information.

Over the last couple of years we have shifted our emphasis from outputs (attendance, checkouts, etc.) to an outcome based approach focused less on how many attend a particular program and more on how a program may impact the lives of our patrons. Outcomes are more challenging to measure and in most cases take much longer to come to fruition, but we have seen positive outcomes already. Ongoing outreach to the school district has led to significant increases in the number of student library cards and to the inclusion of a library card on the district's school supply list. Our concerns regarding barriers to service to youth led to a review of our fine forgiveness practices and the elimination of fines on children's materials. A further example of this is in our makerspace. Three years ago all mentoring was done by adults. Today we have eighteen students certified to not only help others in the space, but also to lead our Tech Tuesday program where they help other patrons with their technology issues.

McMillan extends our civic leadership into our business and facility management decision making. In response to a call for sustainability in the Plan of Service, electricity use has been cut by $\frac{1}{3}$ over the last five years. A city-wide effort for sustainability helped fuel the installation of one of the largest solar projects in central Wisconsin. Community beautification and learning intersect in our Children's garden where community members can enjoy and learn about native plant species and square foot gardening practices. The garden, designed with the assistance of the area Master Gardeners, is a certified Monarch Waystation.

4. McMillan's three major funding sources are: appropriations by the City of Wisconsin Rapids; reimbursement for service to surrounding municipalities by Wood County; and the Library Endowment. City funding is adequate and increasing. County reimbursement significantly exceeds state requirements and the reimbursement rate has been steadily increasing. The Library Endowment Fund is a great example of our community supporting us so we can support them. Currently at \$2.2 million, it allows us the agility and flexibility we need to support new types of programming and services, as well as develop our staff to rise to new challenges.

In addition to the Library Endowment, larger projects and ongoing programming have been directly supported by the Mead Witter Foundation, Bell Family Charitable Foundation and Alexander Charitable Foundation. Our partnership with Viking Electric and a private \$80,000 pledge made the \$420,000 solar project possible. Our many community partners are essential to the success of our program, since their support helps drive funding and charitable donations.



September 26, 2018

To The Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services:

The purpose of this letter is to outline justifications for the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids to be strongly considered for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. As a result of my role, I feel I can speak first hand to the lasting impact this library has had on the Wisconsin Rapids community and its' commitment to continued partnerships and programming that are conducive and receptive to community needs.

The McMillan Memorial Library has built lasting partnerships with our School District as well as other community organizations; this is highlighted by the library's involvement in numerous community and school initiatives including the Wood County Drug Task Force, Healthy People Wood County, and various School District program requests. The library has been involved in activities ranging from simply offering to be the host of a community event to more complex and costly modifications such as the addition of a comprehensive "Maker Space" and podcast recording studio to meet the needs of our students and the community at-large. The McMillan Memorial Library serves our community in a number of unique ways and is always willing to be "at the table" as a partner in discussions with various community organizations to ensure that needs are met. In addition, the Library has illustrated a willingness to change when circumstances warrant it and have a mindset that the Library can be a focal point of our community in many more ways than simply offering books and media to community members. Lastly, the McMillan Memorial Library was recognized as a "Friend of Education" by our Board of Education and School District in 2017 which succinctly illustrates the outstanding relationship our organizations enjoy as well as the impact they have had on our students and staff.

I can say without hesitation that the McMillan Memorial Library would be a worthy recipient of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. If there is a need for further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

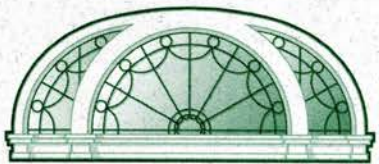
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Broeren', written over a horizontal line.

Craig G. Broeren

Superintendent

715-424-6701

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SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORP.

September 27, 2018

The National Medal for Museum and Library Service
Office of the Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20024-2135

Dear Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services:

It is with great pleasure that the South Wood County Historical Corporation (SWCHC) recognizes McMillan Memorial Library for offering superior historical resources utilized by researchers throughout the region.

Partnership with the historical society began in 1970 when the South Wood County Historical Museum was included in plans for the McMillan building. Through an even better arrangement, we have made our home in the former T.B. Scott Public Library building a few blocks away.

Since 1980, SWCHC Director Emeritus, former Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune columnist and City Historian Dave Engel has relied on McMillan Memorial Library as his source for books, genealogy and, perhaps most crucially, newspapers on microfilm. Any items not available locally were quickly brought on site.

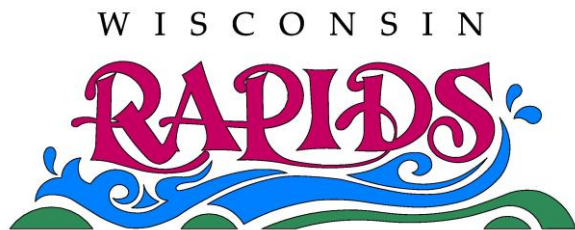
Notably McMillan has been on the cutting edge in offering historical information online, a practice fostered by current director Andy Barnett, also a member of the SWCHC board of directors. McMillan also has done an incredible job of bringing local history to the youth of our community and to former residents throughout the country through its digital format. Andy has also assisted the SWCHC with technical issues as we have enhanced our digital presence.

As time and methods change, McMillan Memorial Library and our historical society continue in a unique and mutually-beneficial relationship, for which we are always appreciative.

Sincerely yours,

SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORPORATION

Philip M. Brown
President



OFFICE
OF THE
MAYOR

Kathryn K. Matthew
Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20024-2135

RE: McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI, National Medal Nomination

Dear Mrs. Matthew,

I am pleased to show my support in nominating Wisconsin Rapids' McMillan Memorial Library for a National Medal for Museum and Library Service. As Mayor of Wisconsin Rapids, I take great pride in all our library is doing in and for our community.

The McMillan Library continually stays focused to meet our community's needs by the programs and resources they offer. They are inclusive and have something to offer all ages. City staff worked with the Library in creating and implementing a communitywide calendar that serves as a single destination for everyone to find library and many other community events. As part of their "outward-facing" promotions, they have partnered with the Mayor's Youth Council on their annual Kids to Park Day event- a day filled with outdoor activities to encourage kids and families to get out to their local parks and play. Being a community hub, the library has also hosted a number of events and meetings for the Youth Council as well.

Not only do they keep the community's needs in mind with programs and features, but they also try to do these things with sustainable practices. With cues from the Mayor's Sustainability Council, they are helping reduce our carbon footprint and save energy through the single largest rooftop solar installation in our area.

The McMillan Memorial Library is an important staple in our community. Their outstanding accomplishments, influence and focus on community needs shows how deserving they are of this award. I hope you will consider them for this honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zachary J. Vruwink". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Zachary J. Vruwink, Mayor
City of Wisconsin Rapids

Zachary J. Vruwink, Mayor

444 West Grand Avenue / Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-2780

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

September 26th, 2018

The National Medal for Museum and Library Service
Dr. Kathryn Matthew
Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20024-2135

Dear Dr. Matthew:

I am happy to write this letter of support for the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin and the 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. It is my sincere hope that you consider and look favorably upon this nomination.

As the U.S. Representative for Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District, I have a keen interest in supporting Wisconsin's vibrant rural communities. The McMillan Memorial Library has been in the community since 1890 and has continued to be an innovative center for literacy and life-long learning for all stages of life.

McMillan Memorial Library has a long history of building community partnerships throughout the rural populations of Central Wisconsin. During 2000, the local economy took a serious downturn and the library took the lead and created a new "Plan of Service" to strengthen and meet the needs of the community. The direct outreach by staff members, to community organizations, farmers markets and schools, gave and continues to give, community members information about the many resources and opportunities the library provides. In doing this, McMillan Memorial Library has grown as a hub for creation, "hands-on" Youth Services, performance theatre and a podcast studio. In the summer of 2017, they built an environmental learning center with the addition of a 235 kW solar roof system. The center helps the community learn about renewable energy and allows the library to reduce their carbon footprint, provide green energy and save taxpayers money.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance in support of this nomination.

Sincerely,



Ron Kind
Member of Congress