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One for the books

Library promotes what kids need most

A local library has kicked off a great program to benefit kids' minds, hearts and bodies. It's a program other public libraries should explore. The Mount Kisco Public Library has begun a half-year-long book program called "Read, Right and Run" to promote reading, service to others and exercise this spring and summer. Participating children will read 26 books in 26 weeks, complete 26 "good deeds," and run or walk 26 miles over the next six-and-a-half months. The idea speaks to what a valuable resource a library is to a community and individual children, today more than ever.

"They will do good, have fun and realize the need to continue," Deirdre Johnson, the youth services librarian, told staff writer Stacy A. Anderson. "They will make reading an exercise of their daily life." As a result of the program, children will become more aware of the habits they already have — for example most children typically walk about a half-mile a day — expand them and build new ones. The program will end with a celebration in October.

The project dovetails nicely with literacy goals for reading from the state Education Department and Board of Regents, which strongly encourage all children and teens to read at least 25 age-appropriate books a year. The program also prompts participants to begin the type of good deeds and community service that they may be required to perform in high school, college and as volunteers later in life. Finally, the walk-run component will get children moving, essential to better health and addressing the nation's child-obesity epidemic.

Clearly, such programs show that this is not our grandmother's library or even the ones most of us remember. Public libraries, always scrapping for local and state aid, have



Stuart Bayer/The Journal News

The Great Mount Kisco Book Race in 2007 raised more than \$20,000 for the new Mount Kisco Library, scheduled to be completed next year.

come light years the last decade, adding technology and other innovations to bring in users — and innovative programs like "Read, Right and Run." Libraries are a community center for people of all ages, one we too often take for granted or, as taxpayers, grumble about supporting.

In fact, the Mount Kisco Library is temporarily located at 55 Maple Ave. until reconstruction of the former Main Street library is completed in July 2009. The Village of Mount Kisco just released a budget plan that now will undergo public review. In it, staff writer Sean Gorman reported, taxes would rise 5.4 percent. Village officials are quick to point out that a chunk of that increase is due to an additional \$300,000 set aside to help pay off an \$8 million bond that voters approved for building the new downtown library. It's money well-spent.

In Albany, lawmakers are fighting to see that there is a reasonable amount of aid for public libraries in the 2008-09 state budget. Under Gov. George Pataki, state aid for such libraries had been frozen at \$3 million a year; last year the amount was increased through legislative act to \$8 million, according to Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, D-Scarsdale, who chairs her house's Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. The executive budget for the fiscal year that began April 1 also contained the \$3 million line; lawmakers are again increasing it to \$8 million, Paulin told the Editorial Board yesterday, with the expectation that Gov. David Paterson will not veto it once the budget is finalized. "Libraries make very good use of the money," Paulin said. "They're great."

No argument here.