

Guest Column for the Ithaca Journal.  
April 2007

On May 15 the Lansing Community Library Center (LCLC) will go before the residents of the Lansing School District with a proposition to permanently establish LCLC as a school district library as defined by New York State Education Law. The library would remain autonomous and financially independent from the Lansing Schools, controlled by the voters of the Lansing School District, sharing the same geographical funding source. A nine person Board of Trustees, also to be voted upon, will be authorized to collect \$108,310 annually in support of the library for books, materials, operation and utility costs and the hiring of a Library Director. A property owner in the Lansing School District with a home assessed at \$150,000 would be funding the library at \$25.50 a year, the cost of a good book. This money is separate from the school budget and will ensure the library's future with a stable source of income.

A favorable vote on May 15 would establish LCLC as a school district library, and will allow the trustees to apply for a charter. Charters are issued by the New York State Education Department to communities with the need and desire to have an autonomous library. A charter will turn the direction and support of the Lansing Library over to the Lansing public, allowing local control and ending its status as a Reading Room of the Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL). The Lansing Library would join the other independent rural libraries of Groton, Dryden, Newfield, and Trumansburg, along with TCPL, as one of the 37 members of the Finger Lakes Library System.

LCLC has been an all- volunteer operation since its opening six years ago. A core of 50 to 60 volunteers give over 350 hours a month to keep the library open and running six days a week. They have raised over \$400,000 to improve, expand, and renovate the facility. LCLC provides the community with over 13,500 books, videos and DVDs. It houses a large print book collection, offers interlibrary loan and free wireless access to the Internet. The renovated building is compliant with all American Disabilities Act requirements and has new rooms for public meeting spaces and art exhibits, a beautiful children's room as well as rooms for research, quiet places to study after school, and a full schedule of adult and children programming.

The growth of the LCLC over these past years has been exciting, yet with growth comes more work for our volunteer staff, along with the reality of the need for a stable funding source. If the voters pass the proposition on May 15, it will allow the Lansing Library to hire a library director who can provide a full range of services, manage daily operations and help organize the volunteers who will remain central to the library's operation. As a chartered library, LCLC will be eligible for funding from Tompkins County and New York State and for grant money not available to the library as a Reading Room of TCPL. When LCLC is chartered the people who fund it, that is the residents of Lansing School District, will be responsible for the direction of its growth and its financial future.

LCLC is a debt free gift to the Lansing Community from the volunteers who have worked tirelessly these past six years. It is hard to put a dollar amount on what a library can bring to a community, but a small dollar amount from each of us will fund its future. LCLC was built with Lansing dollars and Lansing labor, now it is time to secure its place in the community and make it your own. Vote YES. It is your library