South Country Library

Sustainable Libraries Initiative

Final Report
Who Are We?

South Country Library has resided at 22 Station Road in Bellport since 1986. The building was expanded to our current 25,500 sq. ft layout in 2002. Our dedicated staff of 35 librarians and clerks serve a diverse community of approx. 30,000 residents in the towns of Bellport, Brookhaven, Medford, Yaphank and East Patchogue.
A Green team was established and includes administrators as well as members of each department in the library.

An Environmental /Sustainability Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees. It was emailed to the staff and added to our Policy Manual.

The Green team designed our logo and began an e-newsletter called “The Leaflet”. It keeps staff up to date on any new initiatives or changes as well as gives tips and reminders on going green.

Updates/ideas regarding sustainability are discussed at monthly Department Head meetings, as well as in each department.
Staff Survey Results

- We learned that the majority of staff supports the effort to be more sustainable and considers it important that they work for an organization that is environmentally friendly.
- We learned that our Green Team’s efforts to make ourselves and our objectives known were successful since 90% of our staff responded “Yes”, that we have an appointed person/group for sustainability efforts.
- We learned that the staff feels we should prioritize reducing our paper use and our energy use, as well as increasing our green purchasing and our recycling.
Energy

Lighting

- We switched all of our interior lighting to LED lights. We also had an energy audit conducted by PSEG-LI.

- The exterior lights in our parking lots were converted to LED as well.

- Motion sensor light switches were installed in all 7 of our bathrooms, in hallways and other select rooms of the library.

- Signs were put at all light switches to remind staff and patrons to conserve energy.
We replaced outdated thermostats with Honeywell “smart” thermostats and sensors in order to heat and cool more efficiently.

We installed a new HVAC system that is highly energy efficient and runs on 110% clean energy. It also allows for greater introduction of fresh air into the building.

We checked the building for any air leaks and addressed any areas that needed better sealing.
● Sleep/Standby settings have been enabled on all of our staff computers, printers and copiers.

● We conducted an internal assessment of all of our appliances and equipment. We replaced or noted any items that need an upgrade to Energy Star rated equipment. Anyone involved in electronics ordering has been reminded that purchases should be Energy Star rated.

● Public computers automatically shut down at the end of the night. Printers are manually shut down each night by staff as part of closing procedures.
General Reuse & Recycling

- Toner Cartridges are taken to Staples for recycling. Large electronics are recycled by Electronic Waste Recycling in Bohemia.
- Items are offered to other libraries, nursing homes, etc before being disposed.
- Labeled blue recycling bins are placed throughout the library for clear and appropriate disposal of paper recycling.
- We work with Better World Books to donate books we are getting rid of.
- We accept used eyeglasses which are donated to the Lions Club.
- In January and February we collect and recycle unwanted or damaged Christmas light strands.
We partner with the Town of Brookhaven each year to hold a recycling event in our library parking lot. Every fall all Brookhaven Town residents are invited to drive thru and drop off their documents to be shredded, any e-waste they have to be recycled and they Sheriff’s are on hand to collect expired or unused prescriptions medication for safe disposal.
Hand dryers were installed in bathrooms to reduce paper towel use.
Board members receive tablets to review lengthy board reports to reduce printing.
We transferred storage of all files to Google Drive to reduce paper usage.
All computers, including patron computers, default to 2-sided printing.
Paper & Office Supplies

- Switched to paperless payroll in January 2020.
- We changed our method of tracking librarian interactions with patrons from a paper daily sheet to an online Google Form.
- We reduced the frequency that patrons need to fill out disclaimers to cut down on printed disclaimers.
Kitchen

- K-cup pods are collected & recycled by library staff.

- A water bottle refilling station was installed to discourage use of single-use plastic water bottles. The refilling station is available to patrons and staff.

- We set up a compost tumbler in the back of our library by our staff parking lot.
A “Green Tower” was built by a Green Team member and placed in our staff Break Room. It includes a film plastic tube, a pail for compostable material, and a bin for glass recycling since our town does not pick up glass recycling. The dry erase board on top reminds staff of ways they can be sustainable.
• All purchasing is centralized and staff was reminded who to see for purchases and that purchases will be made with our sustainability policy in mind.

• Our cleaning company switched to green cleaning supplies.

• We now purchase FSC certified paper made from recycled material.

• We’ve eliminated the purchase of plastic disposable utensils. We provide reusable utensils and plates as well as shelves where staff can leave their own supplies.
Transportation

- We established a no-idling policy and placed no-idling signs around the building.

- Out of 38 employees, only 2 use a mode of transportation other than a passenger car/light duty truck.

- We arranged a carpool survey to see who lives near each other and would be interested in carpooling. A couple of carpool arrangements were able to be worked out as a result of that survey.

- We have 3 staff members that drive hybrid vehicles.

- Members of the staff are encouraged to carpool or bike/walk if they are reasonable distance.
Our landscaping company uses environmentally safe products for any treatments that are done.

Organic mulch is used around plants to reduce weeds and water requirements, and as a natural alternative to chemical herbicides and fertilizers.

Our custodial staff cleans storm drains as part of regular maintenance.

We maintain a vegetable garden as part of an ongoing Young Adult project and next year that food will be made available to the public in our newly established Food Pantry.
We had a water audit from the Suffolk County Water Authority. They advised us on ways we can reduce our water consumption, mainly by adjusting our irrigation schedule. We will be putting their advice into practice. They also advised us on how we can tell from our meter if there’s any sort of significant leak.

Sensor sink faucets were installed in patron bathrooms on the main floor. We plan to install them on the lower level and in staff bathrooms as well in the future.

Signs were put up at sinks that do not have sensors, to remind people to minimize water use.

Staff has been reminded to alert a supervisor or administrator should they notice any leaks.
We partner with a variety of organizations, businesses and government agencies to expand our reach as well as to bring awareness of their valuable services to our community.

Some non-profit organizations we have partnered with include: Boys and Girls Club of Bellport, League of Women Voters, Post Morrow Foundation, CEEED (Center for Environmental Discovery), Lighthouse Mission, Bellport-Hagerman-East Patchogue Alliance and others. Partnerships include attendance here or at their programs, donation drives, outreach events and more.

Some for-profit business partnerships include: Bellport Brewery, Bellport Jiu Jitsu, Hamlet Organic Garden & others. We also reached out to all of our local businesses to participate in our Small Business Discount program. Our Summer Reading Club prizes always include gift certificates from local businesses.

We also partner with government agencies such as the Department of Labor and Department of Social Services to hold fairs where community members can find jobs and/or services to assist them.

Each year we hold a voter registration drive as well do a display encouraging community members to vote. We have also had programs explaining how local government works and given Community Service credit to teenagers who attend.
We strongly believe in the importance of equity, diversity & inclusion. We strive to ensure that our programs and materials represent the diversity of our community so that everyone knows they are welcome here.

Our staff is how we relate to the community daily and it is of the utmost importance to us that they are a reflection of the community, educated on cultural competencies, and that we have parameters in place to process what they experience and thrive to better serve our patrons.

In order to meet these goals we have policies in place including a Staff Health and Wellness Initiative, and a recruitment policy which states “preference for library employment positions will be given to candidates who reside within the South Country district. This measure
to better ensure the hiring of staff who already know the community and are stakeholders in its well-being, and also promotes a staff which better reflects the diverse community we serve, including underrepresented segments of the community.

Each year we hold programming and do book displays related to Black History Month and Women’s History Month as well as National Coming Out Day and Pride month, which we also distribute ribbons for.
The library plays a critical role in the community in times of crisis. We have an Emergency Response Plan in place so that staff knows exactly what to do in the event of an emergency.

We need to be there for our community, when possible, as a community recovery support system. Our policy reflects that by stating the following “Community-Wide Emergencies: If the library is able to open during or in the aftermath of community-wide, weather-related or other types of emergencies, and staff is able to come to work, and to perform normal public service functions, the library should extend services to allow the community a location to take advantage of building services including: 1. Electricity (if available); internet/Wi-Fi access, printing; charging electronic devices 2. Meeting with other community members during the emergency; gathering and exchanging information 3. Use of restrooms 4. Access to heating/air conditioning and potable water *Please note: The Bellport Middle School is the area’s designated emergency shelter location”.

We try to ensure our patrons feel prepared for times of emergency by providing programming such as Preparedness Food Pantry, Grow Your Own Food, Emergency Preparedness, etc.
We recognize that our financial stability is imperative to ensuring that the library remain here for community members through a variety of conditions. Our yearly budget includes a thorough review of our finances by an accountant to assess our financial position and assist in projecting the next years budget. We also receive an annual audit from an auditing firm. We keep 6 months budget in reserve per our accountant to ensure business continuity and both the accountant and an auditor analyze the library's cash flow to help us ensure that we are able to run in the event of an emergency.

We recognize the importance of ensuring our staff is taken care of so that they can assist in times of crisis. The library provides health insurance through NYSHIP as well as a 403B Retirement Plan through TIAA.
Collections are periodically weeded to remove old/outdated material that isn’t circulating. Parameters are made clear for weeding in our policy. When possible, materials removed from the collection are donated to Better World Books, put on lobby donation shelves for purchase, or sold at book or media sales during the year.

When it comes to ordering we believe a diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences. The library has a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development. A well-balanced collection does not require a one-to-one equivalence for each viewpoint but should strive for equity in content.

We ensure security of library records as well, as stated in our Computer Systems Backup and Security policy. "The purpose of a systems backup is to provide a means to restore the data of a computer system in the event of a hardware/software failure, physical disaster, or human error" and we have done all we can to ensure that we remain resilient. One of backups is located offsite and many of our records are cloud based to ensure access whenever needed.
• Have solar panels installed and/or a white roof on the building.

• Continue to create and expand on community partnerships with local non-profit organization as well as local for-profit businesses.

• Continue to increase sustainability related programming and services.

• Setup additional recycling stations in the library.

• Consistently evaluate our collections for both content and optimal use of space.

• Work towards better ensuring the financial and mental well-being of our staff.