

WAUKESHA

Library working through strategic planning process

By Alex Nemec

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WAUKESHA — The Waukesha Public Library is undergoing a strategic planning process to see what the public wants from it moving forward.

The library is using a consulting company called Wisconsin Library Service, which helps libraries nail down what the communities they serve want and what the library needs to change to provide that, library director Bruce Gay said.

The library finished a survey last Saturday that yielded 1,200 results and held the last of their community conversations with citizens on Thursday, Gay said.

Gay said WILS talked with staff about the library's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

"The consultant is very good at putting together demographic data and library comparison data in the state," Gay said.

The community conversations aimed to seek out what made Waukesha County great and how the library can relate to that, Gay said.

"How can the library align what we're doing with the aspirations that people have for the community?" Gay said. "It's kind of a community focused conversation and then tailing around to how the library can be a part of that."

One of the big topics discussed was the desire of the community to have access to physical books, rather than e-books, Gay said.

"We heard loud and strong in each of these conversations to keep the books, we love having books," Gay said. "Printed material is going to be here to stay and we are proud to offer that. There's a real satisfaction in finishing a paper book."

Gay said there has been a lot of push for revitalizing the downtown area over the last decade and there's a lot of talk about how the library can help.

Citizens also commented saying the library has done a good job in child and adult programming, Gay said.

"It would be great if those can expand and we could have more things to make the library a hub," Gay said.

The adult programming has come a long way since Gay started his career in 1997, he said.

“You’d work hard to plan events and then no one would show up,” Gay said.

“But people are looking for places to go now and the library is a great, free and welcoming space for people to go and programs just bring them in for us.”