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Librarian Kathie Boucher (right) helps Paul Baker of Eagle at the desk in the Alice Baker Memorial Library in Eagle on Tuesday. Eagleville Elementary School students found that getting around their library is difficult for patrons with disabilities and started fund raising to help make improvements.

Students try life through disabled eyes

Experience motivates them to raise money to make Eagle library more accessible

By **AMY HETZNER**
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Town of Eagle — It wasn't until they went through it in wheelchairs and wearing blurry goggles that six students from Eagleville Elementary School realized how difficult it could be for people with disabilities to navigate their local library.

Now, the students, who took on the project as part of their work in FIRST Lego League competitions, are trying to solve some of the problems they encountered.

The group already has raised \$4,750 to pay for improvements such as an automatic door opener, voice-recognition software and magnified computer monitors for the library. A pledge from the Town of Eagle also could help to obtain the \$7,000 they need to raise.

"I think it was neat that they thought of something so practical and so real," said Alison Senkevitch, director of the Al-

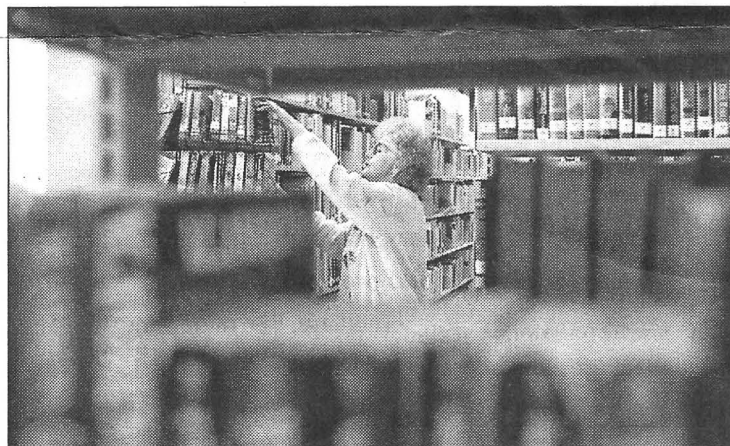
ice Baker Memorial Public Library in Eagle, the intended benefactor of the students' work.

The library has some features that make it accessible to people with disabilities — its front door is wide, and it has a number of large-print books and audiotapes, Senkevitch said. But the library's limited operating budget usually goes for staff salaries and adding to its collection, she said.

The students involved with the project, which also includes three former Eagleville students now attending other schools for sixth grade, say everything they are looking to donate is needed.

"We had a huge list of how we could help the library," said Jordan Teglia, a fifth-grader on the Lego League team.

They came up with the list after taking a tour through the library one day wearing gog-



Liselotte Busche, a volunteer at the library who lives in Eagle, arranges books on a shelf in the Alice Baker Memorial Library in Eagle.

gles covered with plastic wrap to blur their vision, straps that held their arms to their sides and using wheelchairs.

"It was, like, really hard," said Austin Sanders, who went through the library without the use of one of his arms, which was strapped to his body. "You couldn't see call numbers on books and stuff or reach books."

The Eaglebots, which is what the team is named, have taken their case for library improvements to a number of venues in recent months. They have made presentations to town and village boards, both of which have given prelimi-

nary commitment to the library improvements, as well as to other service organizations.

Along the way, they have been raising awareness about some of the obstacles confronting people with disabilities, said Jacki Lewis, the coach for the Lego League team.

For people who don't have disabilities, it's hard to comprehend some of the difficulties such people face, said Garret Ramstack, a 10-year-old at Eagleville.

"I think when they found out they were really surprised," Garret said. "And I'm glad a lot of people decided to help."

Alice Baker Library News

Between June 1991 and January 1992, a brutal war raged in the Republic of Croatia, resulting in the deaths of some 3,000 people and the wounding of another 16,500.

Among the many tragedies resulting from the country's devastation was the destruction of numerous libraries and reading rooms. A report compiled in Zagreb, the republic's capital, states that 65 libraries in Croatia had been destroyed or heavily dam-

aged by December 20, 1991.

The destruction of the school libraries in Slavonia villages which were destroyed when school buildings were razed, is a severe blow not only to the students but to the adult inhabitants as well, for these libraries often served as the cultural centers of the villages.

As librarians know, it takes several generations, considerable time, and

much work by the community and librarians to build and create a library and its holdings.

Taken from American Libraries, March 1992

With the month of May upon us, schools will soon be closing for the summer. The Alice Baker Library will again be having a summer story-hour program. Further information will be printed as soon as dates and times are confirmed.



Winners for the Eagle Historical Society's story contest were (left to right): Mican Kussman, third place, Tina Thom, second place, Jackie Bowey, first place, and Craig Schnuelle, third place.

Senkevitch appointed new director of Alice Baker Library

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well as her professional experience in public education and corporate libraries, she offers a diverse perspective to Eagle.

Alison's bilingual strengths promise to provide a new element to the library and should serve to expand its outreach program. She also brings experience in Internet and database technology as she emphasizes strong reading principles and volunteerism.



Alison Senkevitch

In her spare time Alison and her husband, Alex, enjoy kayaking and hiking and looks forward to discovering the trails and waterways of Southwestern Waukesha County.

Senkevitch started her job last week, with a yearly salary of \$32,000. She replaces Barb Jatzak, who retired after serving the library for more than 20 years.

Later this month, the Friends of Alice Baker Library Eagle (F.A.B.L.E.) are planning a reception and open house for the public to welcome Alison to Eagle.

In other library news:

Other Staff Changes

After seven years of dedicated evening hours at the circulation desk, Donna Fanshaw recently resigned. Until a permanent replacement is found, Maria Hinnars will be filling in. Also, Nan Wessling is offering her cataloging expertise on an interim basis.

Volunteers

Currently the library is utilizing a full troupe of volunteers who regularly report for duty. The nine long-standing and new recruits include: Mary Russell, Lynette Carpenter, Pat Hawes, Mabel Finney, Lori Manke, Marilyn Willms, Jessica Allmann, Tom Varrelmann, Roseanne Carter, and Hilde Helf.

From shelf reading to repairing videos, these weekly volunteers allow the staff to concentrate on other tasks. In the wings ready to assist at a moment's notice are Tom Welch, Darlene Landmann, Roy Leonhardt, Darol Carter, Mary Heizman, and many others who adopt special projects and follow them through to completion.

Preschool Story Hour

The last story hour of the season is Wednesday, May 19, at 10 a.m. with a surprise theme. The program is geared for 3 to 5-year-olds.

Library Facts

A recent report from the library's seven-member consortium group shows that Alice Baker Library in Eagle owns over 31,000 volumes including more than 700 books on tape or compact disk and over 1400 videos on tape or DVD. The online catalog also has quick access to an

Summit, to Walworth County and from Town of Mukwonago to Jefferson County, in addition to almost 5,000 residents from the Town and Village of Eagle.

Senkevitch encourages everyone to stop by a take a look at the growing collection that fits with the new look at the library. "There are lots of cozy spots to sit and read for a while," she said.

Summer Reading Program

The theme of the summer program is "Discover new trails at your library" and the organizational team is trying out a different approach this year in hope that parents and students will appreciate the more simplified reporting format.

The summer reading program is divided now into four groups: preschool to

third grade, fourth to sixth grade, seventh to 12th grade, and a newly added adult readers group.

Informational packets may be picked up starting Wednesday, June 16, and prizes will be awarded throughout the summer. Many parents are already requesting dates for planning purposes. Call the library for dates and times.

Hours

From September through May the library is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon. During the summer months, the library closes at 5 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Eagle library gets its new director

Eagle - The Alice Baker Memorial Library Board recently announced the appointment of Alison Senkevitch as the library's new director.

After graduating cum laude from Luther College with her Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary/special education and a minor in Spanish, Senkevitch spent two years with the Peace Corps in Bulgaria where she assisted a local non-governmental organization in coordinating sponsorships between Bulgarian orphanages and the United States Rotary Clubs.

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