



## Community Library to Open in Shartlesville



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By Michelle Park, Reading Eagle

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It's quite fitting that a book inspired Peggy C. Seitzinger to start a library.

The book detailed how communities are renewing themselves, and it motivated the Shartlesville resident to envision a place where her town could begin to do the same.

"It's really not just about the books," Seitzinger said of the fledgling Shartlesville Community Library. "The need is in getting the community together. It's a place to go (where) people could walk to in the community. I think it could be a focal point for the community."

Seitzinger began pitching the idea around town last year, and now the effort is led by a board of directors and a group of volunteers.

Organizers envision the library as a place where people can access the Internet, sign out books and attend community events. They hope to offer informational programs and homework assistance for students.

The goal is to open during National Library Week, which begins April 12. Operating hours would depend on when volunteers could work, Seitzinger said.

The library will occupy part of a recent addition to Friedens Lutheran Church on Wolf Creek Road. Friedens is providing the space rent-free, and the church and local Lions Club have committed to paying the library's monthly Internet bills.



Bookshelves were donated by Lyondell Chemical Co., West Chester, and Upper Bern Township donated \$1,000 to the effort.

An effort to fill those shelves took place in February with a book and materials collection at the church.

There is no community center in Shartlesville, and the closest libraries are in Hamburg and Bernville, which are about a 15-minute drive away.

The county bookmobile stops in Shartlesville periodically, but many parents and children cannot meet it when it comes to town, said the Rev. Jerry S. Kulp, Friedens Lutheran Church pastor.

"The youth in the community need some place to be that's more educational than hanging out in the corners," said Alyse F. Beahr, a library board member.

Shartlesville resident Lorraine I. Hix, 78, said the library will be a benefit to seniors, especially those who no longer drive.

"I think it's a great idea because there's no place for people in town who do not have access to a computer to use one," she said.

It's unknown whether the Shartlesville Community Library will eventually join the Berks County Public Libraries system, which has 20 branches.

"Every library starts out learning to operate on its own," Seitzinger said. "You have to kind of prove yourself."

Julie Rinehart, Berks County libraries administrator, said the county system is aware of the effort in Shartlesville and has provided Seitzinger with some technical advice through its youth services librarian.

For the Shartlesville library to achieve affiliate status, it would need municipal government support of a minimum of \$2 per capita, Rinehart said.

She added that Shartlesville would fall under the Hamburg Public Library service area, and money is always an issue for public libraries.

"In the current 2009 budget, some of our state aid, which is a significant portion of our funds, has been withheld as part of the governor's budgetary reserve," Rinehart said. "Every library budget is tighter this year, and, in truth, library budgets are tight even in good years."

