

THE MONROE NEWS

Hundreds attend library's opening

Tuesday

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The \$1.5-million complex paid for by Sylvania Minerals includes a 5,000-square-foot library and media center and a 3,500-square-foot community room and kitchen that can be rented for showers and social gatherings.

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SOUTH ROCKWOOD - Karen Myers visited the old South Rockwood Branch Library at least twice a month and loves the new library and community room built by the village and Sylvania Minerals.

"This is gorgeous," Mrs. Myers said as she and her husband, Ray, sat around a warm stone masonry fireplace in the new library Saturday. "It's more spacious and state of the art than the old one. You can sit here and relax and just look out."

The couple was among several hundred who visited the 8,500-square-foot library and community room during an open house and dedication of the \$1.5 million complex that sits next to the village hall at 5676 Carleton-Rockwood Rd.

Also attending were Mark and Jennifer Litwinski of South Rockwood. Mrs. Litwinski said the building reminded her of "something you'd see in Bloomfield Hills rather than" South Rockwood.

The fireplace is a signature piece of the media center that was officially opened following a ceremony and ribbon cutting in the community room hosted by village officials and the Monroe County Library System. The library is one of 16 libraries operated by the system and one of three to have a fireplace. Bedford and Summerfield-Petersburg are the other branches with fireplaces, said Nancy Bellaire, director of the system.

Library services in the community have "changed dramatically" in the small community since planning for a new library began years ago, Ms. Bellaire said.

"It took many people working with passion and a connection to you to make it all come together," she told those packed into the community center for the ceremony. She singled out David Ross, community librarian; Alesia Testorelli, branch technician; Judy LaFleur, retired librarian, and Nancy Colpaert, retired director of the county system, as among those helping to create the new 5,000-square-foot library.

Chris Kinney is president of Great Lakes Aggregates that owns the Sylvania Minerals' quarry that paid for the complex. Mr. Kinney called the building "fabulous" and said it demonstrated trust between the village, the community and the business.

"You couldn't have assembled a better group of people from the village and company," Mr. Kinney of Flat Rock said. "This is a feel-good project and the kids here enjoy it. That was our goal - that the community had something like this to use."

The quarry, which has existed since 1995, employs about 30 people and produced under 3 million tons of aggregates in 2016, he said.

A year ago, the village could not have held a ceremony indoors like Saturday's. The community room can be rented for wedding showers, birthday parties and other social functions. The village council and planning commission have already met in the building, said Dan Tilley, village president, who presented gifts to Mr. Kinney and other employees of Sylvania Minerals for their contributions to the project.

Mr. Tilley paid tribute to a number of local officials, including a core building committee and the late Thomas A. Bondy, 54, a member of the village council who died June 29 and who was like a building consultant for the project.

Patrick Lewis, life-long resident and chairman of the planning commission, commended the Friends of the Library and Kerry Guiliano, its president, for fundraising and "helping to make sure this brand new investment is cared for, well-used and continues to be a jewel of our community for decades to come."

Ms. Guiliano, a granddaughter of Mr. Sterling, said the Friends raised almost \$16,000 from about 50 families and groups who donated toward a founding membership in the group. The money will go toward buying window treatments for the library movie nights and baby changing stations in the bathrooms and adjustable tables for children's programs.

Mr. Lewis' grandfather was Morley Riggs, the last superintendent of the former South Rockwood Schools and who served eight years as village president. Mr. Lewis praised both Mr. Riggs and Mr. Sterling for fighting for "enhanced educational and social opportunities and growth for our community's children." He said it was his hope that the library will be "this generation's legacy to our youth and the community at large and that we in turn can pass along these same opportunities with which we have been so richly blessed."

Mr. Tilley called the building the "greatest thing I've ever worked on." He and Mr. Kinney recognized Brett Baker, the builder; Keith Childress, the quality control manager at Sylvania Minerals; Art Martinez, in charge of purchasing and Bill Bentley, plant manager.

State Sen. Dale Zorn, R-Ida, said not too many communities build libraries.

"It's not done very often," Sen. Zorn told the throng. "This is a great afternoon for a small community and another learning institution for our kids."

He and new state Rep. Joe Bellino, R-Monroe, presented a resolution signed by Gov. Rick Snyder and lawmakers praising the village and Sylvania Minerals.

Former State Rep. Bill LaVoy said the building was an important milestone for the community.

"I hope the residents use this and treasure it for years to come," Mr. LaVoy said.

Berlin Township Trustee Dave Reaume and his wife, Denise, agreed, saying the library and community room was a "wonderful addition" that could serve many residents.

Among many items donated to the complex was a wall display of historical photos of the village compiled by Tim and Debbie Hammar of South Rockwood; a shiny mantle made of barn beams by Kevin Olson of New Boston and copper weather vane atop a wooden log and a clock donated by President Pro Tempore Matheau Van Wassehnova and his wife, Janet.

Boy Scout Troop 566 and Pack 522 brought in an American flag and led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Members of Girl Scout Troops 70832 and 67759 served as hosts and greeters.