

NEWS

From the Library

From the Director's Desk



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DATES TO REMEMBER:

- December 24 & 25:** All branches closed for Christmas
- December 31 & January 1:** All branches closed for New Year's
- January 20:** All branches closed for MLK Day
- February 17:** All branches closed for President's Day

Mississippi County Library System Director Lowell Walters

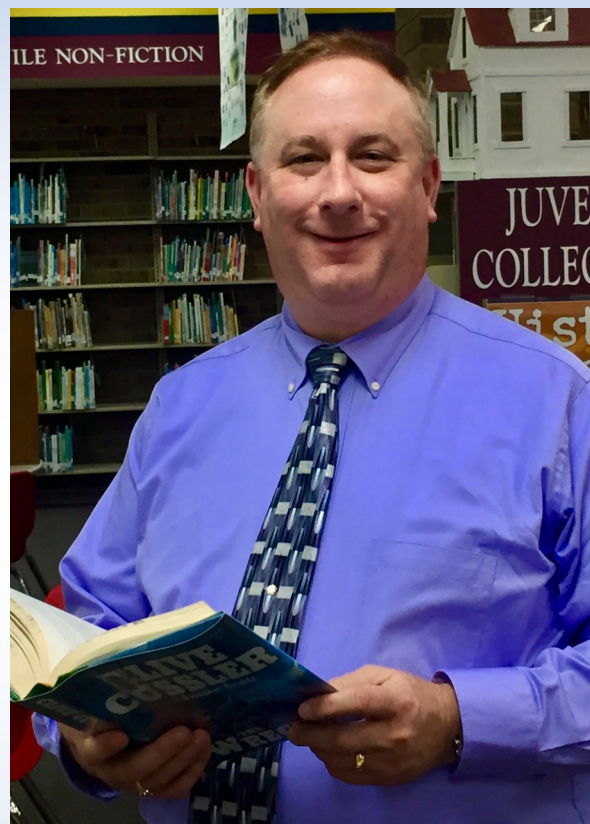
To open this issue of the MCLS newsletter I would like to compliment our personnel for making 2019 a great success. Looking back over the past year we have accomplished much.

In January we opened the rebuilt Keiser Library eleven months after a tornado had destroyed it. Then we worked around the Blytheville roofing and HVAC renovation throughout the summer and into the fall. (See our feature story by one of our new employees, Tom Henry). Osceola dealt with a plethora of repairs, including two incidents of vandalism and theft. We also made some small changes in the floor plan at Manila to add shelving for its growing collections.

All personnel have had to be nimble to create and support different types of programs for people of all ages. We have deployed and learned how to use to a new catalog and circulation system. Many employees have adapted to new work schedules as we have added evening and weekend hours at several locations

More changes are on the way. The Osceola building needs to have the roof upgraded as soon as possible, and there are many other facility challenges at that location. I have been talking with several individuals and entities about renewing the landscaping at the Blytheville building. Hopefully there will be at least the start of a new look by spring.

As we transition into 2020 an exciting initiative is the establishment of our "Library of Things." This will be a growing collection of non-traditional items that people will be able to borrow just like books. The collection will include items such as board games, toys, puzzles, thematic educational kits, crafting kits, and



MCLS Director Lowell Walters

cakepans of various shapes and sizes.

Finally, we aim to offer a greater variety of programs. The latest new offering is table gaming activity that takes place every Monday evening at Manila and Blytheville. Folks of any age gather around board games and card games while building intergenerational relationships -- somewhat like those that developed on the front porches of days now gone by.

Enriching lives. That's what we are about as we pass through the holiday season and into a new decade.

MCLS: Old & New

Tom Henry, Programs and Grants Specialist



Replacing Shingles & Reinforcing Structure

Gone are the rainy days of Blytheville Public Library customers hopscotching around 8-12 rainwater buckets dotted along library service areas. Also gone are the dreary days of dark, muted lighting. Today, customers and staff celebrate the completed roof and HVAC renovations that ensure dryness, and a beautiful skylight that creates a brighter, friendlier library experience. Since Blytheville's emergency needs have been met, attention can now turn to improvements in patron services and programming.

Formerly, when it rained, employees monitored multiple leaks (especially around the skylight), but often predicting where the water would appear was difficult. With a 45° roof incline, the water often traveled down the rafters and appeared feet away from the actual leak location, depending on the intensity of the rain. Renovations replaced 801 sheets of plywood (decking), multiple rotten rafters, various soffit sections, added a new OSHA required HVAC catwalk and replaced both a beautiful skylight and new efficient HVAC units. "We had five units (four 10-ton and one 15-ton)" says MCLS Director Lowell Walters, "one of them was at the point that we were stripping pieces off of it to service all the other units because they just couldn't get parts."

Walters is proud of the new skylight. The Sierra Group sub-contracted with an individual whose meticulous work paid off: now the skylight is the centerpiece of the branch. A feature that used to make the space seem dark has brought new life and allowed the library to bring in plants and a hydroponics feature. Now, "it's too bright at times," Walters says. He plans to incorporate a fabric feature that will soften the light.

However, Blytheville renovations did not fix all system emergency strategic needs. "Osceola has a lot to do yet. Osceola needs a new roof. We received estimates of \$65,000 to \$80,000 to place a new membrane and include a slight pitch under it," Walters said, which would fix the problem of Osceola's flat roof pooling rainwater on its edge and further ruin-

ing the current membrane. "We need to get the water out of Osceola. Osceola has a lot more damage and it looks like dry rot on some of the upstairs floors. We also plan to make Osceola truly handicap accessible, so we are trying to get some estimates for a platform elevator and maybe write a grant to get that addressed," Walters explained.

Other needs include updating Osceola's upstairs kitchen. Currently, the kitchen sink doesn't drain properly, but when an attempt was made to fix the problem, it was discovered that the floor must be torn up to complete the work. The facility also needs enlarged restrooms. Current restrooms are too small to accommodate wheelchair accessibility. "We really need to enlarge the bathrooms because there is no way a person that needs wheelchair accessibility...well it's just not there. That would require internal, structural rearrangements that would probably be costly and include rearranging an office," Walters explained.

He also described a potentially dangerous situation, "We must maintain a lawnmower to trim...and we have gas and the lawn mower...behind a fairly thin wall [storage room] on the main service floor area. So, there is a lot to be done at Osceola, but the first step is to get the water out. Fortunately we haven't had any electrical issues because of water down there yet."

Current plans are to use general funds to perform the Osceola emergency repairs. That method was never an option for Blytheville's renovation because, "The Blytheville figure

(Continued on page 3)



Workers Replace 1 of 5 HVAC Units

(Continued from page 2)

was a lot higher...its roof is a lot bigger and a lot more involved structurally,” Walters explained.

Blytheville repairs are not currently paid off, therefore Walters plans to devise some sort of “thermometer-like sign” to allow people to know how much has been paid and how much is still owed. “Originally, we thought it would only be about \$300,000,” Walters said. But “after the project got underway, we had to add one 10-Ton [HVAC unit] which was more than \$20,000. Also, original estimates didn’t include sales tax, so it’s more like \$350,000...the current, unpaid principal is around \$292,000,” Walters said.

So, the system used \$50,000 from general funds and took a \$300,000 loan, backed by three local banks (Farmers, First Commercial and Southern Bancorp). Therefore, the library now must reallocate \$3,000 monthly [\$36,000 annually] from other operations and expenses to pay the note. “I have to take it out of a blend of books, personnel and other expenses. You have to cut in other places. Our county funding has been fairly healthy for over a year, but it’s not going to make up for it and that could always change too if people don’t buy local...[because] we get an eighth of a cent on all county retail.”

So far, MCLS has received over \$9,000 from individuals, businesses, civic organizations and even elementary children putting their coins together to help. Online donations can be made at arcf.org/mclsfund

With the completion of Blytheville’s renovations and with plans already in place to begin work in Osceola, new improvements can now come in the areas of patron services and system programming. “The payoff is that I can start to move on...it’s much more exciting to put in a Maker Space or a smoothie bar if we can. Those have a much more direct impact on the customer experience,” Walters said. “We will see more improvements if we get the funding to do them.”

Walters has already spoken with schools to gauge interest in a student-led effort to operate a smoothie bar or some other food venue. It will be something different because he doesn’t want to compete with businesses – he wants to complement them. He added that food venues in public libraries are “very much a big thing now.” Walters explained, “A Maker Space is basically [like] the excellent EAST labs in a few of our county schools. But ours would basically be a 21st Century workshop where you are dealing with productivity software and even bleeding over to things like sewing machines and soldering irons...it’s kind of like becoming a community workshop for people of all ages...things we would have called ‘shop class’ and ‘home economics’.” Some libraries offer an entire kitchen to their community and offer cooking classes; perhaps Osceola could as well once their renovation is complete.

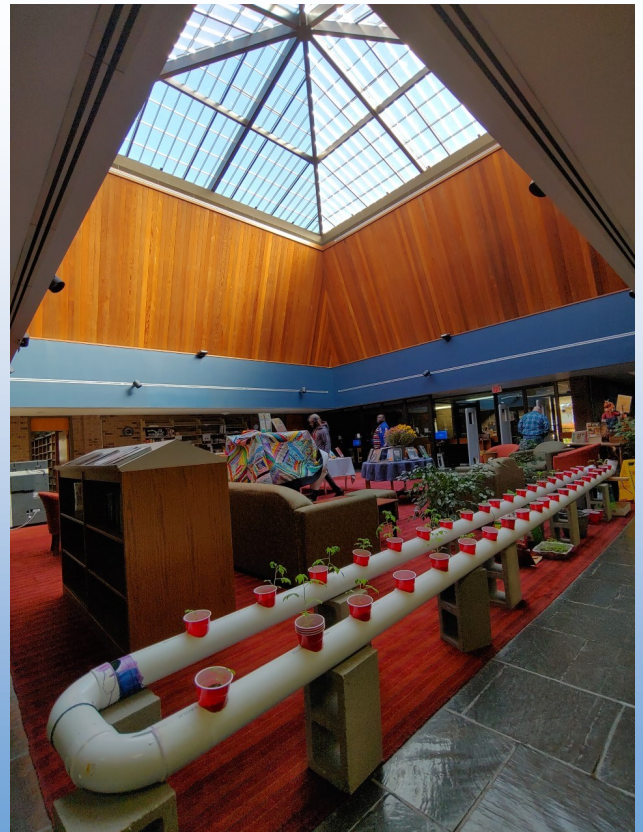
Walters also expressed a need to improve the general aesthetics of System interiors, such as the modern renovation at the Keiser Branch. Another future improvement on Walters’ list of goals is to upgrade lighting to LED, possibly from subsidized grants through Entergy.

Returning to Osceola, Walters expressed his desire to renovate and better utilize their second-floor stage. “Osceola has a really cool, old stage on the second floor. And the backstage area is where we are getting a lot of damage to the floors due to our leaks. So, I’d really like to get to the point that we can do little community things in that theater.”

He added that another group of citizens is currently trying to build a theater downtown, “So I’d like to do Osceola as a kind of artsy/fine arts sort of library along with culinary arts, because we already have that kitchen there. Whereas I’d like Blytheville to be more technology-oriented...where we do more of your Maker Space things.”

He added that the benefit of offering a Maker Space is that people using EAST labs are typically 19-years old or younger, but the library is intergenerational. “You get out of school for a couple of years and already your kids know more about technology than you do. So, we can do more of this adult programming...the library’s future is in programming. It doesn’t mean that our resources are totally obsolete, but our future needs to be giving our people a reason to come to the library buildings. And that is in programming,” Walters said.

Lastly, Walters applauded the Blytheville restoration work performed by the Sierra Group (roofing, soffit work and some electrical), D & L Electric (installed four of the five HVAC units and performed electrical/ventilation work for the restrooms) and Milligan Heating and Air Conditioning of Lake City (installed the fifth unit). He also expressed his excitement regarding the future planned improvements.



View of the New Skylight

Customer on Center Stage

Beth Roberts, PR & Customer Service Specialist

To Mississippi County, Wayne Breckenridge is many things: a full-time Blytheville fireman, a community volunteer, a gamer, a helping friend. To the Mississippi County Library System, he's all these things and more. For the last three years, Wayne has been the System's handyman, taking on odd jobs and projects and working hard to help make the county's libraries a fun, attractive, and safe place.

Most of the library's buildings are aging. The Osceola Branch is over 70 years old; the Blytheville Branch is pushing 50. Older facilities require constant maintenance and improvement projects. "Wayne helps us stay on track," says MCLS director Lowell Walters, "as a fireman, he's very up-to-date on safety issues. If he sees something that could be a problem, he lets us know and takes care of it right away." Wayne stays on top of fire alarms, exit signs, and entrance issues. The door at the Osceola branch was coming out of its frame, which kept it from locking properly and allowed pests into the building. Wayne not only rebuilt the frame, he produced a custom-made door that will keep the branch secure and draft-free for years.

While Wayne enjoys helping out with maintenance issues, the real thrill of the job comes in working with wood. "I enjoy taking a pile of wood, working with it, and finding an outcome," he says. Wayne has made king-sized farmhouse beds, bookcases, shelving, and various other hand-crafted items for friends and family. "Hand-



Custom-built vanity at Blytheville Branch

made means that no two items are the same. I can take a picture of something you like, then customize it to your needs, wants, and styles." Wayne has put his creative flair to good use for the System. In addition to the Osceola Branch doors, he's built a custom vanity for the Blytheville Branch and risers for the children's area at the Keiser Branch. Next up on his to-do list are giant checker pieces, customized computer tables, and a LEGO play table. Why does he do so much for the MCLS? "Libraries are always there," Wayne comments, "What is the community's need? The library is there to fulfill it. I like to be a part of that."

Helping the Library System is a natural extension of Wayne Breckenridge's full-time job: Blytheville Fireman. He's been a Fire & Rescue professional for 19 years, starting out in upstate New York and moving to the Blytheville department 12 years ago.

"The job stays interesting," he says, "it's a constant adrenaline rush. Everything changes, nothing stays the same." Wayne started working as a fireman because "I enjoy helping people, being of service to the community." Perhaps it is this sense of connection and community involvement that helped develop his interest in games. Wayne loves to play games, of all sorts (except Scrabble!). He's looking forward to helping out with the new game night at the Blytheville Branch, Monday evenings at 6 pm. Come out to meet Wayne and play a game with him!



Children play on the risers Wayne built in Keiser



Wayne Breckenridge rests for a moment at Blytheville Branch



Calling All Builders!

The Keiser Library has a world of achievements waiting for you to unlock! Each achievement gets you points...save them up and trade your points for a PRIZE!

Every Monday from 3:30-4:30, at the Keiser Public Library. Call Samantha at 870-526-2073 for more information.

STEM Hydroponics

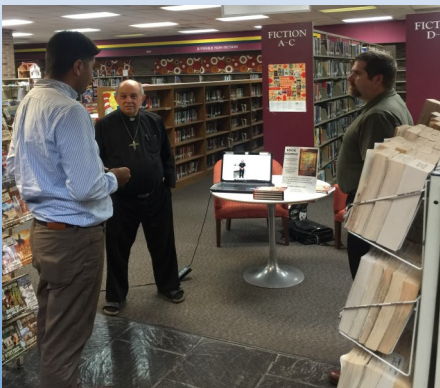
The Blytheville Branch is going green! Thanks to STEM Club volunteer Scott Follett, we have a hydroponic station taking advantage of the rays from the new skylight. This unique design pumps fertilized water through sewer pipes in a continuous loop, nourishing the tomato plants growing in the red cups. Each cup is filled with kitty litter (to discourage bacterial growth) and has several holes drilled in the sides that allow the water to flow through. Come to a STEM Club meeting for more fun and educational projects, and stop by the Blytheville Branch to watch us GROW!



Local Author Book Signing

For over 10 years, Rev. Clayton Kilburn has published the "Catholic Way," a monthly devotional newsletter. Originally distributed to Native American families in Arizona, the "Catholic Way" has grown in popularity throughout the United States. Now Rev. Kilburn has compiled his best articles into this collection, titled "Living Faith Faithfully and Why We Do It."

Rev. Kilburn signed copies of his collection at the Blytheville Public Library on September 25. Like many other local authors, he generously donated copies of his book to the Mississippi County Library System. Books by local authors are currently on display in the Blytheville Branch and are available for check-out at any MCLS location. If you'd like to borrow his book, reserve it at bit.ly/MCLSearch and you'll be notified as soon as the copy is available for local pickup!



Rev. Kilburn talks with library

New MCLS Team Members

Beth Roberts, PR & Customer Service Specialist



Join your MCLS in welcoming Samantha Tacker, new manager of the Keiser Branch! A Mississippi County native, Samantha is a graduate of Rivercrest High. After graduation, she returned to work in the school district for 10 years: "I loved working with the kids and watching them grow." Samantha hopes to bring this love for children and learning to her new position. "I love being able to meet new customers and work with computers," she says, "I enjoy working with people and helping them find the information they need." Samantha is an outdoorsy person who loves to hunt, fish, camp, and work in the yard, and she enjoys spending time with her fiancé and children. She is excited to serve the Keiser community and can't wait to see more customers, especially children, at the Keiser Library. Stop by to meet Samantha during Keiser's new operating hours (listed on page 9) and

bring your kids to Minecraft Mondays from 3:30 to 4:30 (more information on page 5)!



The Mississippi County Library System is excited to announce the hire of Freda Smith as a staffer at the Osceola Branch. Freda will be assisting in the Osceola Branch and floating among other branches: you never know where she'll turn up! A graduate of Blytheville High School, Freda first worked for the Mississippi County Library System while she was still in school. After graduation, she worked at Walmart, where she discovered a love for helping people. Freda is now putting her customer service skills to good use at the libraries: "I love that the library is quiet. I like to read, especially mysteries and magazines, and I love to help people." Freda is always looking for ways to improve the library experience: she'd love to see an afterschool tutoring program flourish! Drop by the Osceola Branch to welcome Freda to the family!



Your MCLS is delighted to announce the creation of a new position in the hire of Tom Henry as the System's first Programs and Grants Specialist. Tom is excited to help the System expand its program offerings for all ages. "I believe our library is essential," he says, "There are very few places that can have such a life-long impact upon a person as their local library. Our books, videos, programming, classes, online resources, etc. educate and enrich everyone's life." Tom holds a Master of Arts in history and comes to MCLS as the former News Editor for the Blytheville Courier. He plans to put this education and experience to good use in his new position: "I am most fulfilled when I am talking with a customer and can point them to a new resource or a new author or even a new topic of discovery that makes them light up with excitement," he says, "I thrive on being a tour guide to others, showing them places of exploration that I've already been to and encouraging them to come along with me in a world of life-long learning."

Be on the lookout for new programming initiatives. Tom hopes to increase opportunities for customers of all ages, through new story times, STEM activi-

ties, book clubs, study groups, craft clubs, and more. If you'd like to help out, he is ready to recruit volunteers! "Give me enough volunteers and we would revolutionize our libraries and our county! Volunteers tap into their passions and multiply themselves through programming. The more ownership the community takes of their library, the better they become." Contact Tom at thentry@mclibrary.net to learn ways you can participate!

Board Members Sworn In

On November 12, 2019, County Judge John Nelson attended a MCLS board meeting and held a swearing-in ceremony for the members. Of the six board members who took the oath of office, three are brand-new members: Jamie White, Diana Holmes, and Faith Ashley. Absent members will be sworn-in at the January 2020 meeting. Stay tuned to www.mclibrary.net and our social media pages for updates about MCLS board members and their vision for our future, and check out new our *Board Spotlight* feature, in which we will highlight the accomplishments of individual board members.



Judge Nelson Swears-In MCLS Board Members

Board Spotlight

Beth Roberts, PR & Customer Service Specialist



Your MCLS is delighted to have Jamie White join the Board of Directors! Jamie is currently pursuing her second Master of Science degree, in Library Media from UCA. Previously a mathematics teacher at the Rivercrest School District, she is currently employed as the library media specialist at Osceola High School. Jamie will bring her education, experience, and a life-long love of libraries to her new position: “Everywhere I have lived, the library has been one of the first places a look up and go to. It was Einstein that said, ‘The only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library.’ I love that the library is one of the few places left in the world where quiet and thoughtfulness is cultivated.” Jamie looks forward to a MCLS “with access to, and utilization of, technological advances *alongside* the familiar comfort of a book in the hand.” We look forward to Jamie’s leadership!

Employee of the Quarter

Please stop by the Wilson Branch to congratulate manager Linda Dawson on being named the first MCLS Employee of the Quarter! In her branch, Linda hosts an adult book club, runs Bunny’s Book Club (a lap baby story and craft time), and holds frequent story and craft times for kids of all ages. She also works diligently to establish connections with Rivercrest Public Schools and The Delta School; she works hard to make sure all students have access to a library card and library services. Linda actively promotes the Wilson Branch and the MCLS in the community: you’ll find her ready to welcome trick-or-treaters, dressed as Mrs. Claus for stories and pictures, and manning a booth at town fairs. It is this constant effort to try new things and welcome new faces to the library that prompted director Walters to honor her this quarter. Linda is about to establish a Friends of the Wilson Public Library group: go see her to volunteer!



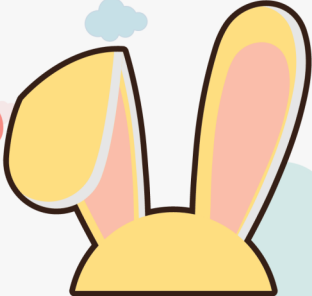
The Employee of the Quarter is a new initiative established by the Director and comes with a monetary award. Great work Linda, and congratulations!

MCLS Programs

Wilson Public Library

Bunny's Book Club

1st Friday Every Month
1:30 - 2:00 pm



Blytheville Public Library

Tell Me a Story

Preschool Story & Craft Time
Tuesday & Thursday Mornings at 9:30



Manila Public Library

FAMILY GAMING NIGHT

Monday Evenings | 6:00 to 8:00



BLYTHEVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

YA FOREVER BOOK CLUB

A Book Club for the young...and the young at heart!
Second Tuesday of the Month
6:00-7:00 pm | Snacks Served!

GAME NIGHT

MCLS
MISSISSIPPI COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

MONDAYS 6-8 PM

BLYTHEVILLE LIBRARY
GAMES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!
MONDAY EVENINGS AT 6 PM



Happy Halloween!

We had a #MCLSpooky time this Halloween! Library staff across the county decorated displays, made crafts, opened library doors, and visited local schools and events to celebrate the holiday. Some gave candy prizes in a “guess how many pieces are in the jar” competition. We can’t wait until next year!



2nd Place Winner!

Congratulations to Linda Williams, head of the MCLS Chili-Cookoff Team! Your MCLS was proud to enter a booth in both the Blytheville and Manila competitions this fall. Linda cooked up her famous chili and took home the People’s Choice 2nd Place trophy at Blytheville for the second year in a row! Come see our trophies on display, and be sure to come to a Cookoff to taste her award-winning cooking next year!



Directory

MCLS Library Branch Hours

Blytheville Public Library

200 North Fifth Street, Blytheville, AR 72315

Phone: 870-762-2431

Fax: 870-762-2442

Hours

Monday	9:00 am — 8:00 pm
Tuesday	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Wednesday	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Thursday	9:00 am — 8:00 pm
Friday	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am — 5:00 pm
Sunday	1:00 pm — 4:00 pm

Osceola Public Library

320 West Hale Avenue, Osceola, AR 72370

Phone: 870-563-2721

Fax: 870-563-6550

Hours

Monday	12:00 am — 8:00 pm
Tuesday	12:00 am — 8:00 pm
Wednesday	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Thursday	12:00 am — 8:00 pm
Friday	9:00 am — 5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am — 2:00 pm
Sunday	12:30 pm — 4:30 pm

Manila Public Library

103 North Dewey Avenue

Manila, AR 72442

Phone/Fax: 870-561-3525

Hours

Monday	1:00 pm — 8:00 pm
Wednesday	1:00 pm — 5:00 pm
Friday	1:00 pm — 5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am — 2:00 pm

Keiser Public Library

112 East Main Street

Keiser, AR 72351

Phone/Fax: 870-526-2073

Hours

Monday	3:00 pm — 8:00 pm
Wednesday	2:00 pm — 6:00 pm
Friday	12:00 pm — 4:00 pm
Saturday	10:30 am — 1:30 pm

Leachville Public Library

105 South Main Street

Leachville, AR 72438

Phone/Fax: 870-539-6485

Hours

Monday	1:00 pm — 5:00 pm
Wednesday	1:00 pm — 5:00 pm
Friday	1:00 pm — 5:00 pm

Wilson Public Library

1 Park Street

Wilson, AR 72395

Phone/Fax: 870-655-8414

Hours

Monday	12:30 pm — 4:30 pm
Wednesday	12:30 pm — 4:30 pm
Friday	12:30 pm — 4:30 pm



Quilt Raffle!

The Plain & Fancy Quilters have donated this AWARD WINNING quilt and pillow shams for a library raffle!

Tickets are 1 for \$5 or 5 for \$20

Available at the Blytheville Library
Drawing December 3rd

Mississippi County Library System

200 North Fifth Street

Blytheville, AR 72315

www.mclibrary.net

Support your library and donate to the MCLS Fund! Easy online giving available at arcf.org/mclsfund

All donations are tax deductible!

MCLS

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM



Like **Mississippi County Library System** on social media to stay up-to-date on Library news and events!

