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For Immediate Release

Ellsworth Public Library Celebrated Supporters at Appreciation Event and Shared Vision for the Future

Photos from the event are available for download [here](#).

ELLSWORTH, Maine — The Ellsworth Public Library (EPL) welcomed more than 100 supporters, civic leaders, and community partners to a special Donor Appreciation Reception on July 21. The night was dedicated to celebrating the generosity that sustains one of the region's most treasured institutions while offering a glimpse into its future. Hosted by the Library's Board of Trustees and a host committee, the evening recognized the many individuals, businesses, organizations, and volunteers whose philanthropy enables the library to expand programs, collections, and services beyond what municipal funding alone can provide.

"Every day we see firsthand how this library changes lives," said Library Director Sarah Lesko. "Our donors make it possible for us to meet people where they are, whether they're learning to love reading, searching for a job, navigating a personal crisis, or simply looking for a welcoming place to belong. This event was our opportunity to simply say, 'thank you.'"

City of Ellsworth pledges \$2 million local match

The event also highlighted progress toward a potential renovation and expansion project. The City of Ellsworth has pledged a \$2 million local match if the library receives the requested federal Congressionally Directed Spending award currently under consideration by the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee. Library leadership expressed gratitude to U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King and their staffs for their guidance and support throughout the federal funding process.

Library growth in fiscal year 2026

The reception highlighted the library's growth in recent years. In Fiscal Year 2026:

- More than 77,000 people visited the library, a 6% increase over the previous year.
- The library presented 753 programs and events.
- Staff collaborated with more than 30 community organizations.



-New library cards were issued to residents from 38 Maine communities, in addition to seasonal residents who call the Ellsworth area home for part of the year.

Attendance at library programs has nearly doubled in recent years, reaching more than 11,000 participants annually.

A glimpse into the future

Guests also had the opportunity to view preliminary architectural renderings exploring how the historic library might be thoughtfully renovated and expanded to better serve the community while preserving the character of the 1817 building.

"As wonderful as it is to see every room full of activity, it also reminds us that we've outgrown our space," Lesko said. "The Ellsworth Public Library has evolved into far more than a place to borrow books. It is a community center, a lifelong classroom, a gathering place, an after-school destination, and, for many people, simply their happy place."

Community support funds many library programs and services

Lesko noted that while the City of Ellsworth remains the library's primary funding partner, approximately 25 percent of the library's FY26 operating budget came from additional sources, including private philanthropy, grants, and community support.

"That means many of the programs, services, collections, and opportunities our community values most are possible because generous people choose to invest in this library," she said. "We truly could not do this work without them."

The reception also recognized the many different people whose dedication strengthens the library, including members of the Host Committee, the Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Ellsworth Public Library, city officials, library staff, and members of a newly formed advisory group helping explore future facility improvements.

More than books

During her remarks, Lesko shared stories illustrating the library's impact, from helping a patron navigate a personal crisis to inspiring a reluctant young reader to discover a love of books.

"Libraries are not simply buildings filled with books," Lesko told attendees. "They are places where lives change. They help people learn, connect, recover, dream, and thrive."



As the library continues planning for its future, community members are encouraged to learn more about the proposed renovation and expansion project and to share their ideas about the next chapter in the library's more than 125-year history.

About the Ellsworth Public Library

In 1897, the Ellsworth Public Library (EPL) found a permanent home in the Federalist-style Tisdale House, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building was gifted to the City of Ellsworth by George Nixon Black with the enduring condition that "the premises conveyed shall be always used for a public library."

Today, EPL is an open, welcoming, and safe space where people come together to learn, connect, and grow. It is a vibrant hub of curiosity and community, where everyone is invited to participate, explore, and enjoy. EPL believes that a strong library is a cornerstone of a sustainable and healthy community and that literacy is a vital foundation for the well-being of all community members.

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