

- WMRLS Night at MassMutual Center: January 23 Fundraiser
- Self-Service Disc Repair Machine available for use free-of-charge to all WMRLS member libraries
- One copy to each member library ~ PLEASE ROUTE TO ALL STAFF!

WMRLS Annual Meeting: An Emotional Experience

This year's WMRLS Annual Meeting was an emotional experience for the more than 70 members of the western Massachusetts library community present.

President Eric Poulin noted the importance of this meeting, with serious threats to the six Regional Library Systems. In the face of major State funding cuts looming for FY11, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) is considering **reducing the number of Regions to 1, 2 or 3.**

WMRLS Staff focused on several of the Region's positive initiatives over the last few years. A major area of focus has been working to achieve better **Internet connectivity** for public libraries in the 30 communities that had no access and where the public is lamentably underserved.

WMRLS worked closely with the **Massachusetts Broadband Institute** (MBI) to ensure that libraries are consid-

ered "anchor institutions" where Broadband connections will reach the largest number of people. WMRLS helped MBI roll out its mapping project through libraries so the public can make known exactly which addresses have no access. WMRLS has also applied for \$475,200 in Federal Stimulus funds to establish all the public libraries of western Massachusetts as Public Computing Centers. If funded, this project will provide netbook computers, enhanced wireless connections, a networked printer and training so that every public library can serve as an effective center for people throughout Western Massachusetts to "test drive" the much-improved connectivity coming to all the communities through the efforts of MBI.

In recent years, WMRLS has looked beyond shrinking State funds to equalize services for Western Massachusetts and its libraries. Great help has come from the

Friends of WMRLS who have conducted several fundraising activities to help WMRLS in its efforts. The Friends provided funds for materials for the bookmobile service in its darkest hours. They assisted with the purchase, retrofitting and painting of a pre-owned truck to replace the oldest and smallest truck in the WMRLS delivery fleet. Also helping with this acquisition was the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, which awarded WMRLS a \$15,000 grant and Big Y Supermarkets donation of \$5,000 to the Friends. The purchase of another delivery truck is in process right now, and the Friends have pledged funds to assist with the work needed to get the truck ready for service. Delivery has increased in priority for libraries, many of which have joined networks like C/W MARS and MassCat. The amount of materials being requested by the people of the area has risen another 10% over the past year,

with the annual total now surpassing 1.8 million.

Regional Administrator, John Ramsay, introduced the WMRLS staff who were able to attend, and read off the names and responsibilities of all WMRLS staff who have displayed much dedication and positive spirit in providing a very high level of service to member libraries despite the shrinking budget and staff size and the uncertainties that lay ahead. **All present rose to give a rousing ovation to all the staff of WMRLS.**

It was encouraging to hear that two WMRLS State Representatives, upon hearing of the threats to WMRLS, claimed they could not envision a western Massachusetts without WMRLS, which is so firmly entrenched in the fabric and quality of life throughout the four Western counties for almost 50 years.

The most difficult decision WMRLS has had to make is to end its beloved **Bookmobile service** that has been providing new materials to small public libraries since 1940. The 24% State budget cuts of FY03 eliminated funds for new materials, and the budget has never been restored to previous levels. The threat of a 28% reduction for FY11 made it clear that this service could no longer continue in a credible manner.

Toni Golinski-Foisy, President of the **WMRLS Friends**, talked about the history of WMRLS and the Friends recent help in providing replacement delivery trucks, their "Honor Someone Special" effort to get donations to purchase children's books and the "Book It to the

Library Road Race" that raised funds and awareness about the importance of a Regional presence in the 4 Western counties. Most recently, they, along with the Friends of the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System, chartered a bus to take people outside Route 495 to participate in the Rally for Libraries at the State House.

Becky Plimpton Marconi presented a slide show highlighting the two-year **Together We Thrive** LSTA grant from the MBLC that provided Circuit Riders to help small public libraries take care of much needed projects like weeding, space planning, preparing for automation and website design to improve their libraries and the services they can offer their users.

WMRLS business actions included approval of the FY11 State budget and Plan of Service, and election of members and officers of the Regional Executive Board.

Rob Maier, Director of the MBLC, presented the difficult choices the Commissioners have to make in the face of a 17% cut to the bottom line of the State accounts they administer. They have determined that they need to cut the Regional account by 28%, which could result in the **consolidation of Regions**. The Regional Administrators and staff have undertaken a process to determine the most cost effective Regional structures to ensure continuance of the most critical services for libraries statewide.

Several members asked questions about the future. **People were very con-**

cerned that the State might in effect abandon the West, the area of the State where the Regional movement originated and where the remote and rural demographics require a strong and attuned Regional presence. Without WMRLS to advocate for this part of the state, librarians fear that the kinds of advances WMRLS has focused on for so many years will not continue or will not be priorities for other organizations that are not as focused on this part of the State. Rob assured people that it is clear that a local focus is critical.

Emotions were running high for many of the librarians who have relied on WMRLS for nearly a half century for practical and much needed assistance in so many ways. It is clear that people feel the West is the neediest part of the Commonwealth and that WMRLS is the organization to ensure reliable and focused attention on this unique area.

John Ramsay stated that WMRLS will do all it can to continue bringing libraries together and overcome the isolation that can occur in this most remote part of the state. He referred to the WMRLS Mission Statement that the Region "provides leadership and services to foster cooperation, communication and sharing among member libraries of all types. WMRLS assists member libraries in promoting equitable access to excellent services that contribute to a literate, enriched, and productive community."

... They could not envision a western Massachusetts without WMRLS, which is so firmly entrenched in the fabric and quality of life throughout the four Western counties for almost 50 years.

WMRLS Night at MassMutual Center Fundraiser

The monies that WMRLS raises through this fundraiser will be used to purchase a second self-service disc repair machine (for use by all WMRLS member libraries at no charge) to be housed in a Berkshire county library location. Please help WMRLS promote this fundraiser by making copies of this flyer and distributing it to your library users. Thank you!



Saturday January 23, 2010 at 7:30 PM
MassMutual Center Arena

Springfield Falcons vs. Hartford Wolf Pack



Come out and meet Wally the Green Monster and enjoy a night of action-packed hockey to benefit the Regional Library System that faces deep State budget cuts!

Regularly \$17, tickets are only \$10 with this offer!

Simply fill out the order form and mail back to the Falcons office, or call Julia Kincade at (413) 739-3344 x105.

*(*Offer not valid at the box office. Tickets will be mailed up to January 18th. Tickets ordered after this date will be available at the Will-Call window of the Box Office lobby on the night of the game.*

Western MA Regional Library System Saturday, January 23rd - Deadline to order: January 18th

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone # () _____

_____ Tickets x \$10.00 = \$_____ Please make checks payable to: Springfield Falcons

Credit Card # : _____ Exp. _____

Contact info:

Julia Kincade

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To: Library Director

Please route to all staff. Thank you.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

WMRLS Services are provided through state funds administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

WMRLS NIGHT AT THE MASSMUTUAL CENTER SPRINGFIELD FACONS VS. HARTFORD WOLF*PACK



The Springfield Falcons will be hosting the Hartford Wolf Pack on January 23 with the game starting at 7:30 pm. Boston Red Sox mascot "Wally The Green Monster" will be in attendance and fans interested in purchasing tickets to this game can do so by completing the order form on page 3 of this newsletter and mailing it back to the Falcons Office. Proceeds will benefit all western Massachusetts libraries through the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System.

SELF-SERVICE DISC REPAIR MACHINE



Through the LSTA "Together We Thrive" grant, WMRLS has purchased an industrial-quality disc repair machine. This machine is available exclusively—and at no charge—for ALL WMRLS libraries.

The VMI 3500 Buffer can clean and repair DVDs, CDs, and 3 inch discs. The repair cycles take between 30-60 seconds for each disc. It is completely automated and easy to use.

Due to current staff shortages, please telephone to schedule an appointment no more than 1 week in advance. **Contact:** Shirley MacLean, Office Assistant, WMRLS, 413-665-9898 x130.

Monies raised through the upcoming WMRLS Night at the MassMutual Center Fundraiser will be used to purchase a second self-service disc repair machine to be housed at a Berkshire county library location.