



Press Release - East Lewis County Community Engagement Initiative

Date: Monday, February 22, 2021



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Timberland Regional Library and its Community Engagement Team are reaching out to East Lewis County residents to determine how best to serve patrons.

Timberland Regional Library (TRL) is in the first phase of its outreach initiative, East Lewis County Community Conversations, created to get input from East Lewis County residents. The information will undergo data analysis to help inform future projects, said Timberland Regional Library Community Engagement Manager Carisa Sullivan.

As part of the first phase of the outreach initiative, TRL has posted a [survey online](#) at TRL.org. The survey can be found on the location pages of East Lewis County library branches, including [Packwood](#) and [Mountain View](#), until the end of March.

"These are extremely broad questions," Sullivan said, "but they are meant to be, so that we can get a big picture of these communities and what their expectations are for the future."

Information being gathered will help TRL better understand the needs of the community and learn what limitations are experienced regarding access to library services, as well as provide insight into potential local partnerships.

"It will help us figure out those areas of our district that we're not reaching," Sullivan said. "Figuring out where those populations are or what those unmet needs are will help us determine how to shape our services."

"A great deal of useful information has already been gathered," Sullivan said.

Brian Zylstra, the Lewis County representative serving on the Timberland Regional Library Board of Trustees, is happy to see TRL connect with the people of East Lewis County through the outreach program, he said.

"In order to provide the best library service to the people and communities in this region, it's important to have a dialogue and learn what people want or don't want," Zylstra said. "I hope this outreach effort will ultimately help Timberland improve on providing the kind of library services that the people in the east end of our county want and deserve."

With the lease for the Mountain View branch building in Randle expiring soon, Zylstra is eager to hear from area residents on their needs and desires, he said.

"My top priority as a trustee is for TRL to work with that community to find a new location in Randle for the Mountain View branch," Zylstra said. "We hope people in Randle will share their ideas and help us make this happen."

Zylstra hopes the outreach initiative will give TRL a better idea of what programs are popular and used by patrons in the region and provide a clear picture of what both patrons and non-patrons would like, so that they eventually become library users, too, he said.

"It's important that even more individuals and families become aware of all of the great things they can learn and do and experience through everything that Timberland has to offer," Zylstra said.

Members of the Community Engagement Team had planned to go out and meet with people in person and form a focus group made up of East Lewis County residents, but the COVID-19 outbreak had an obvious impact on those plans, Sullivan said.

As an alternative, the Community Engagement Team is conducting virtual "in-person" conversations with East Lewis County residents. To take part in a virtual focus group, contact CommunityEngagementTeam@trl.org.

Members of the Community Engagement Team attended the Feb. 12 Packwood Business Owners Committee meeting. Timberland Regional Library Community Engagement Librarian Sarah Little spoke about the project during the meeting and answered questions about the team's work.

East Lewis County Community Conversations is part of a larger, regional-wide project called Connecting Communities. Similar future initiatives will take place in other areas of the region serviced by TRL, which includes Grays Harbor, Mason, Thurston, and Pacific counties in addition to Lewis County.

Timberland Regional LIBRARY provides for the entertainment, information, and lifelong learning needs of Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, and Thurston county residents at 27 community public libraries and six library service partner locations. The library system is funded mainly by local property taxes, timber tax, fundraising efforts of TRL Friends of the Library, and generous donations by individual supporters.

All Timberland library programs are free and open to the public. Anyone needing special accommodations to participate in a library's programs may contact the library one week in advance. For more information visit [TRL.org](#)

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