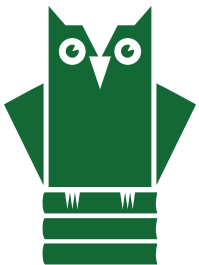
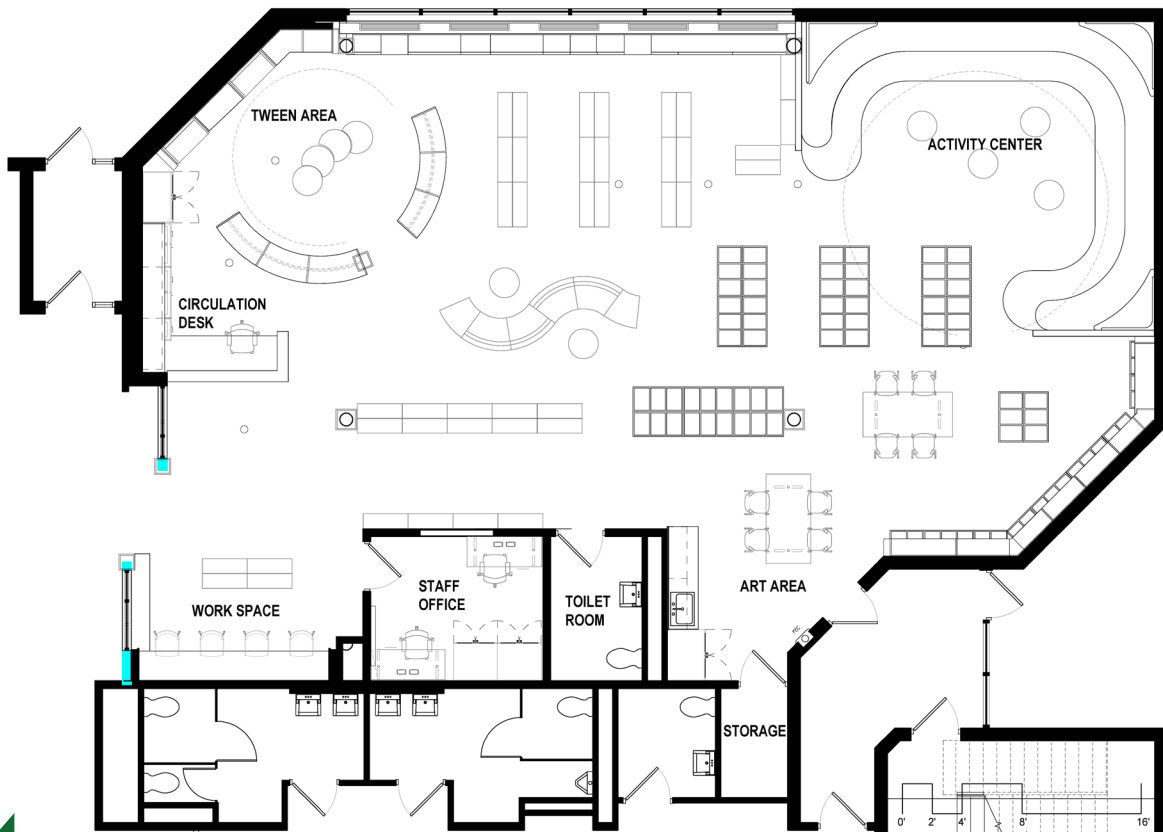


Inspiring
Informing
Enriching
AMAZING!



The Campaign for the *Mary Lu Walker Children's Room*



Southeast Steuben County Library

Libraries are about freedom. Freedom to read, freedom of ideas, freedom of communication. They are about education, about entertainment, about making safe spaces and about access to information.

–author Neil Gaiman



A special place

The library is a magical place for children.

It is a space created just for them. We know that libraries are not just about books anymore, but what happens in the Children's Room these days? Story time. Scavenger hunts. Art and crafts projects. Music. Puppet shows. Cooking projects. There are books, of course – and movies, toys, and computers. We offer the chance for early readers to read to the most patient and nonjudgmental of beings – dogs. Most of all, we welcome everyone – children and parents alike – to be curious, to engage, and to explore.

According to the Pew Research Center nearly 80% of parents say that libraries are “very important” for their children, citing that libraries instill a love of reading and books and provide resources they cannot get at home. Over 70% say the library is important as a safe place for children to be.

A fitting legacy

For many years, Mary Lu Walker shared her very special magic with children at our library.

Mary Lu was an iconic singer-songwriter and beloved community leader whose creative career began when she learned to play the guitar at age 48. She wrote songs - mostly for children - often about cooperation, peace, fairness and love. She recorded eight albums and entertained children around the globe, from Zimbabwe to Ukraine, from Fiji to Pakistan and beyond –and at the Library.

Even at age 90, Mary Lu could be found captivating the children of her adopted community. Her gentle, welcoming demeanor and generosity of spirit embodied the essence of the library. Generations have been captivated by her contagious enthusiasm for life. Children who were once her audiences

grew up to bring their own children to see her and to sing with her.

When Mary Lu died in July 2021, her family approached us about helping to fund a reinvigoration of our children's room as a fitting testament to her achievements and her commitment to children and the arts. Our response – how perfect!

We immediately began dreaming about how to transform the space, identifying priorities, and thinking about logistics. How could we create a fitting legacy to such a gifted woman, such a good friend? The answer – by building an inviting space for children to explore, gather and just be. A place that encourages and celebrates reading, learning and creativity.



Creating an environment that fosters lifelong learning and community connections

The plan

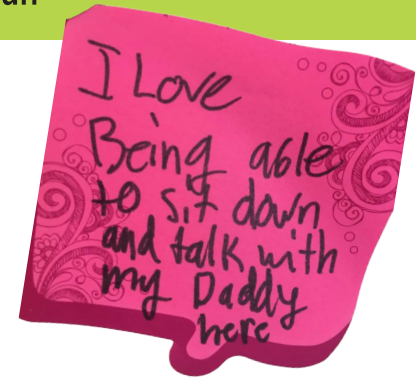
In November 2021, the Board of Trustees selected local firm Hunt EAS to work with us to design and help execute the Mary Lu Walker Children's Room project. With input from staff and trustees, Hunt devised a plan for a space that will welcome and serve our community's children for years to come.

The project elements we are most enthusiastic about include:

- A child-friendly space that is more easily supervised and is inclusive and accessible
- A new entranceway that clearly delineates the children's room, eliminating confusion about checkout desks for children and adults
- Relocation of the children's checkout desk that will be safer and more functional
- A defined tween space
- A STEM and art space, complete with cleanup sink and storage
- A performance/storytelling theater
- A study and technology area
- Play space
- Some easily movable shelving and furniture that will allow for greater flexibility including lower shelves and front-facing book units that will allow for easier access
- Colorful acoustic panels to mitigate the noise that is inherent to childhood
- Softer lighting that can be modulated
- Integration of technology
- A more playful motif
- Improved workspace for staff

What's next?

In July, the Board received bids for the project and chose local firm Streater Associates as our contractor. They are just as excited about the project as we are and are eager to get started. Construction is expected to begin in early October.





Funding

While the Walker Family's generous gift will get us started, the realities of pandemic-era construction and the scope of the project have resulted in a price tag that makes it necessary to supplement that gift. How will we do this?

- We are applying for a New York State Construction Aid grant, with an excellent chance at success
- We will explore additional grant opportunities and foundation support

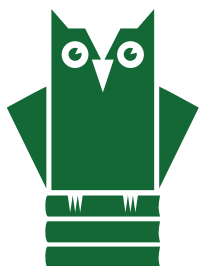
You can help!

We are also enlisting our community – lovers of libraries, of children, and learning – to make this investment in the future and to honor the remarkable Mary Lu Walker with a gift to this campaign. Help make our vision a reality.

In acknowledgment of Mary Lu's generosity and talents and the joy she spread wherever she went, we have named our giving levels after her songs, which live on. Gifts of \$1,000 or more will be publicly displayed in the new space and all gifts will be acknowledged in the library's annual report.

- Share the Sunlight Circle \$10,000+**
- Friends of the Children Circle..... \$5,000+**
- Good Samaritan Circle..... \$2,500+**
- Rainbow Circle..... \$1,000+**
- Dandelions Circle Under \$1,000**

Thank you for your consideration!



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