

# Perryville Library planning to close for seven months

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PERRYVILLE — At one table, students busily made beaded bracelets while a rousing game of cards took place at a nearby table.

When Perryville Middle School closes at the end of each school day, as many as 100 students come to the Perryville Public Library to hang out. However, they are going to have to find a new hangout for the rest of the academic year.



Photo courtesy of the Cecil Whig

“We’re shutting down Nov. 22 at 5 p.m. but we’ll re-open in the summer of 2024,” said Naomi Copenhaver, manager of the branch at 500 Coudon Boulevard. “Then all the books, all the shelves have to get packed up.”

A service will put everything into storage while renovations take place. The branch, now 16 years old, will be gutted to reset the floor plan designed in 2006 said Morgan Miller, Director of Cecil County Public Library.

“This project is just under \$1 million,” Miller said, noting the funds will come from Friends of Cecil County Public Library and savings. “Friends is helping us with the furniture.”

Tables will be brought back, as will the shelves. The chairs are worn out, Miller said.

Miller said the new floor plan is to make the branch meet current needs, including a space for teens to gather and socialize.

“Right now they meet right next to two of the quiet study rooms,” Miller said. “We’re making a teen room and a family gathering space like we have in North East.”

“This is what the community needs from us,” Miller said, adding Perryville is one of the most used branches in the system of six.

The Perryville branch is experiencing exponential growth in the use of the building. While countywide the usage went up 25% in 2022 and 30% the previous year, over the past year Perryville’s usage has more than doubled, Miller said.

“Our library building as a community center is a huge part of what we do here,” Miller said. The renovations will cater to that usage.

The quiet study rooms will go from two to four and will move to a central location closer to the entrance. Those current study rooms will become the teen center, with the family

gathering center adjoining. The computer lab will become a business and career center. All the carpeting will be replaced and additions will be made to improve the acoustics in the 15,000 square foot library. However, the library must close to get the work completed.

“It makes me a little bit sad,” said Jourdin Flowers, an 8th grade student who has been coming to the library after school since 6th grade. Even Perryville Middle School staff acknowledge their students’ use of the library.

“The middle school has a bus line, a walker line and a library line,” Copenhaver said of dismissal at the school, with a sidewalk connecting the two buildings.

Copenhaver said she and the teen librarians have been working with Perryville Outreach Program to encourage the students to go to the town funded after school program in the interim.

“We’ll also work with the (Perry Point Veterans Administration), Community Connecting Us, the schools and the community to stay connected,” she said. “We will be sending people to Rising Sun and North East and we will do more children’s programming at both branches.”

Miller said along with the students, the VA also has a regular cycle of bringing veterans to the branch. Large employers send potential hires to the library to fill out the online application.

Copenhaver said the teen librarians will offer programming through the Outreach on Elm Street in Perryville and CCU on North Main Street in Port Deposit as well.

Ethan Betz tried to convince library staff to delay the renovations to begin when the school year ends.

“It means a lot to me coming here every day,” Betz said. “I just love the library.”

Haley Shook doesn’t come after school every day but enjoys the time spent there.

“I hang out with my friends,” Shook said. It was the same for all the students who flitted from table to table to chat or headed outside to enjoy the sunny afternoon.

“It’s really hard to get kicked out,” Flowers said. The staff doesn’t tell the students to be quiet, but rather encourages the socialization.

“We’re thinking of having a going away party,” Copenhaver said. “Some of these kids will be going off to high school next year.”

That won’t stop Flowers.

“I won’t be able to come until I turn 16 and get my license,” Flowers said.