

## Valley City Barnes County Public Library Notes

August 23, 2017 by Steve Hammel

Hello Barnes County, It's back to school season for many, even those of us with college students. My son is starting his third year at VCSU and I hate to say it but I kind of miss back to school shopping with him. I don't really miss the expense but when he told me the other day he spent over \$200 on a used chemistry book I think maybe we were getting off cheap when school shopping entailed pencils, paper, a couple pairs of jeans, half dozen t-shirts, and new athletic shoes. As a cultural aside, what do you call athletic shoes here? I grew up in the Rockford Il., which is 90 miles west of Chicago and we had a mix of names; tennis shoes, sneakers, and gym shoes, all of which were used interchangeably. Yes, I'm old enough that we had to change from "street shoes" to indoor shoes for gym even if I was wearing a new pair of Adidas. Thankfully they did away with that silliness by the time I got into high school. Although my junior and senior years I kept a pair of cleats in my car when we played football, softball, soccer, etc. in gym. I couple guys complained because I could out cut them on the turf but the gym teacher, who was also head football coach, just chuckled and walked away. Definitely a different time.

One school supply everyone can afford, because it's free, is a library card. I won't bore you with the fact that children who read regularly do better in school, are more imaginative, better problem solvers, and have a higher degree of empathy. I'll refrain from reminding you that no matter what you do in life reading and writing is most likely a part of your work day. I won't mention that today's school children will live in an even more interconnected world and the need to differentiate between correct and incorrect information will be even more necessary and the development of that skill will be greatly influenced by their reading ability.

Please remember the library is about so much more than books and reading. We will be starting computer coding classes this year. Why? There are more jobs in computer science available than there are graduates to fill them. Think about it, over the next twenty years, computer programming related fields will have double digit job growth. Integrated technology is everywhere, in our homes, at work, on our farms, everywhere, and someone has to program that technology to make it work. The library will be offering the opportunity for children in our community to get a jump start on important job skills. The really great thing about library afterschool programs; kids work at their own pace, there are no tests, and they are having fun while learning. Depending on interest we may create a separate Girls Who Code group. Why a separate group? The interest in coding wanes as girls move into the teenage years and beyond. 66% of girls 6-12 express interest or enroll in coding classes. When they become teens that number drops in half to 32% and even more drastically by the time they become college freshman with only 4% interested in coding. In 1984 37% of computer science grads were women, today that number has dropped to 18%. Remember all those unfilled high paying programming jobs I mentioned above? Why not fill half of them, or more, with young women?

Libraries transform, but only if you use them.

Announcements:

Help us get a jump start on strategic planning by challenging the director to a game of Cribbage. Be prepared to talk about what you would like to see for the library in the next three to five years.

The library board meets the second Tuesday of every month at 5:05 pm.

Please stop in and pick up a calendar of events. September calendars should be available soon. Make sure you know what's going on this fall.

Be sure to visit our website [www.vcbclibrary.org](http://www.vcbclibrary.org)