

Dear citizens of Brownsville Borough, Brownsville Township, Franklin Township, Jefferson Township, Luzerne Township, Newell Borough, and West Brownsville Borough:

OUR PLIGHT

As some of you may know, the Brownsville Free Public Library is in peril of closing its doors next year. While we continue to be a hub for literacy, learning, enrichment, and resources, we are severely lacking in local funding. According to the Pennsylvania's Public Library code, "state aid is planned to supplement or stimulate local pride, responsibility, initiative and support, rather than to substitute for them." More simply, the public library relies on the support of its local municipalities and county for funding in order to survive. The PA Public Library code also states that public libraries are to be funded locally at \$5.00 per capita, and unfortunately the Brownsville Free Public Library is only funded at \$2.78 per capita. This is the only standard for state aid funds that our library does not meet; and for this reason we may have to close.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Often times it is the everyday operating costs that can weigh on a nonprofit public library. The growing costs of collection development and supplies, utilities, and the repair and maintenance that come along with a ninety-year-old building are weighing heavy as we struggle to locate sustainable funding. The Board of Directors have looked over the budget multiple times, finding where expenses can be cut without sacrificing staid aid standards and making difficult choices. The library as a whole has come to realize that cutting any more from our budget will lead to sacrificing value and service, the two reasons that make us a vital part of our community. Our value lies in trained staff, substantial programming for both children and adults, a growing collection, and abundant resources to help every citizen within our communities to enrich their life. With over 800,000 Pennsylvanians lacking internet in the home, the public library steps in to help teens and adults with their résumés and job search, and our technology and resources help to lower the homework gap for our local students.

WHAT WE NEED

The Brownsville Free Public Library is in desperate need of an additional \$15,000.00 of sustainable funding a year in order to survive. We have been working with local municipalities and our County Commissioners to find such funding, but times are tough all across our county. We would like to humbly ask any citizens or patrons who value our local public library, or in whose lives we have made a difference, to send in letters of support. Send them to your local council members, County Commissioners, or to the Brownsville Free Public Library. Tell your stories of how the library has positively impacted you or the life of those you love, and sign it with your name and municipality. We will take these letters with us to council and county meetings as we hope to showcase the detriment of losing our public library.

WHAT ARE WE DOING

We continue to look at our options, speak with our local municipalities, County Commissioners, apply for grants, accept volunteers, and work with our community members to find a solution that doesn't lead to closing our doors. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve the 15,055 residents of the seven municipalities within our service area, as well as the counties of Fayette, Greene, and Washington since having joined the WAGGIN network in 2016. While remaining cautiously optimistic, we must also prepare for the worst. We promise we will not go down without a fight, and will continue to serve our community for as long as you'll have us. Let us hope that it is another 90 years.