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Local girl takes on New York (and Rome)

Lyman Drake is chair of the board of trustees of the Community Library Association.

By **LYMAN DRAKE**

This weekend, after nearly seven years as executive director of our Community Library, Colleen Daly will pack her bags and head for New York City, where she will assume her new job as director of development at the New York office of the American Academy in Rome (Google it! It is a remarkable institution.) Her task there will be to generate philanthropic support for a budget nearly 10 times the size of the Community Library's.

The selection of Colleen for this major nonprofit post is a tribute to her outstanding record of accomplishment at our library in Ketchum.

Colleen's long association with the library began in 1981, when she worked part-time at the circulation desk. Subsequently she was invited to sit on the board of directors, where she served with library founders Clara Spiegel, Jeanne Lane and others. When she was offered the post of executive director in 2005, Colleen brought her legendary energy to the job. Under her leadership, the library saw a transformative increase in the amount of cultural programming, and overhaul of its financial systems marked by increased transparency, enhanced professionalism in management and greatly strengthened relationships with donors.

Colleen articulated a vision of the library as a central marketplace for ideas—ideas that entertain, educate, challenge and inspire. "To be relevant today," she maintains, "a library must be at the cultural heart of the community." Books—the traditional business of libraries—are only one of several media for sharing ideas.

One aspect of advancing this vision entailed providing fast and free Internet access to those who find themselves—whether by age, geography, economic status or cultural factors—on the dark side of the digital divide. With her staff and board, Colleen led a successful capital campaign to bridge this divide by installing the fiber-optic Internet connection that now provides the valley's fastest Internet service. With this infrastructure in place, the library staff can now offer new programs and services ranging from video conferencing and live-streaming events to computer and Internet instruction for those of us who are not—as they are sometimes called—"digital natives."

Striving to create an ever-more relevant library, Colleen and her team expanded the library's free lecture series from about one a month in 2005 to nearly 100 events in 2011. She capitalized on her web of connections with valley residents and visitors as well as creative people outside our community to bring in outstanding speakers and presenters. From authors Ridley Pearson and Dave Barry to Time magazine's White House photographer, Diana Walker, Colleen has brought a brilliant array of talent to the community. Night after night, something interesting happens at the library.

Meanwhile, day after day, the children's library offers a wonderful array of programs to stimulate the imagination and curiosity of our young people.

Behind the scenes, Colleen has built a strong, professional staff focused on providing the highest level of service to patrons. She has pushed the board to extend its vision, become more engaged, deepen its bench and broaden its range of skills. Library use and library support have grown dramatically under her stewardship.

The library leadership—both staff and board—is committed to sustaining and building on Colleen's inspiring legacy. All of us—a staff, board, donors and patrons—will miss the magical presence of Colleen Daly, and we wish her "buon viaggio" as she embarks on her extraordinary new career.

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