

Deb Hyde named parade marshal

BY **KAREN DUMS**
For the Review

Deb Hyde, director of the Park Falls Public Library, was chosen to serve as parade marshal for the 71st annual Flambeau Rama Parade to be held at noon Sunday, Aug. 4 in downtown Park Falls.

Hyde had multiple nominations for parade marshal and said she is “honored” by the recognition. She said the library intended to have a float in the parade this year pertaining to the children services summer reading “adventures” program, but if that happens, she will not be aboard, as she’ll be leading the parade as marshal.

Hyde was born and raised in Duluth, Minnesota. She received her Bachelor’s Degree in elementary education with a minor in library science from the College of St. Scholastica-Rochester campus. She taught school in Washburn for four years and worked briefly as a teacher’s aide on nearby Madeline Island.

Hyde said her favorite place is “where I am now,” which is in Park Falls with her rescue animals, two cats, Jade and Toby, and a dog, Charlie.



TOM LAVENTURE / PCR

Parade Marshal Deb Hyde

Hyde enjoys small towns, and was drawn to Park Falls after accepting the adult services librarian job in 1986. The library became her “favorite place,” but she still longed for teaching. So she worked as a librarian and as a part time elementary school music teacher at the former St. Anthony Catholic School in Park Falls. Hyde added that she “loved that time” in her life.

“I never thought I’d be a librarian,” Hyde added. “I thought I’d always be a teacher. But working in a

public library gave me the opportunity to meet Park Falls’ community members in addition to the parents of my students.”

Local libraries should be friendly, welcoming, and good places for all to gather, she said. That has been the underlying goal all along.

During her early years she described a “huge undertaking” that was the library renovation under former library director Gary Olson. By the late 1980s the city

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offices, including the fire department, had moved out of the library which allowed for an expansion into the former city space. In addition, there were energy-efficient windows, a new entry was built and an elevator installed to make the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act that went into effect in 1990.

Hyde noted that this was at a time when libraries in general were becoming places that were more than just a place to “check out books.”

“It was a challenging and exciting time and well worth it,” Hyde said. “There was no elevator in the building yet, and heavy things, such as tables and chairs, plus the entire inventory of books-by-mail, had to be moved from the basement to the third floor.”

This was no small feat, but high school football players were recruited to help staff with the heavy lifting and were rewarded with pizza and music afterward.

Olson was front and center for the renovation that took nine months to complete, insisting that some of the aesthetic features of the building remained. That included the original woodwork and signage that was still in place, as well as the fireman’s pole that found a home in the lobby.

In the early 1990’s another, less stressful change took place when the library transitioned from the card catalogs to an automated system. This streamlined many library activities by having an online system that provided easier access for patrons and library staff for using interlibrary loan and other services. Small town libraries have neither the space nor the budget to house an enormous collection, but being part of a large consortium expands the capability of obtaining a variety of books and other materials, she said.

With all that advancement, Hyde said she is also happy that the ease

of automation did not remove the “people aspect” from the library.

“My most important mission is that the library is welcoming, safe and comfortable for everyone and it is my hope that it will always stay that way,” Hyde said.

Park Falls Public Library prides itself on the personal touch, she said. When patrons order materials from other libraries they receive a call, not an automated or robo-call, but an honest to goodness person to tell them what they’ve requested has arrived.

Hyde was named library director when Olson retired in 2016. She immersed herself in the position.

“I applaud our city for backing our library, for seeing how important it is to our community and its citizens,” Hyde said. “The city and the community will keep challenging me and that’s good. My job will never become stagnant.”

The latest challenge was to plan for the return of the city offices after the former space was made available to become the Flambeau River YMCA. The move was completed in June after the library vacated the former city offices and worked around several months of renovations.

“The second renovation went quicker than the first,” Hyde said.

It was a big adjustment, however, some of those changes were necessary and expedient, and the end results are positive, she said. The library staff and patrons were patient all through the construction. Adult Services librarian Judy Kraetke contributed to the effort by suggesting a second level be added in the open air lobby.

“Judy is a practical person,” Hyde said. “It was her idea to add the mezzanine reading area that overlooks the lobby, as well as my office, which is located adjacent to that area, in what could have been wasted space.”

Other construction relocated offices and meeting rooms where there was elevator access.