

Press Release

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Crowdfunding Campaign Launched for Willimantic Public Library Book Bike

Book Bike campaign to receive matching grant from Sustainable CT's Community Match Fund

What could be better than having a full-service free public library right on Main Street? How about a Book Bike that brings library services right to your doorstep? The Friends of the Willimantic Public Library are looking to acquire a Haley tricycle with electric assist and a cargo bin over the two front wheels. The bin will be loaded with books, a laptop, Wi-Fi hot spot, and all kinds of other materials for Library patrons of all ages and interests.

Imagine a library staff member pedaling to schools and daycares, housing complexes, the Senior Center, the Card Home, the Food Coop, or even a local laundromat. Imagine the Book Bike turning up at town events like the Farmer's Market, 3rd Thursday, Shaboo performances, or the Boom Box parade. When asked about the project, Library Director Dan Paquette explained, "I'm very excited about the prospect of reaching out to the whole community, especially to people who can't make it to the Library."

Library staff may combine a visit from the book bike with reading a story in a local park, delivering craft kits, or providing curriculum packs to 6th grade science students. The Book Bike rider will also be able to connect teens to tutorials and information about further education, and introduce adults to free courses, job listings, telemedicine, and databases for research. The guiding idea is to promote literacy and computer skills for everyone while building awareness of all the Library has to offer.

The crowdfunding campaign opens Monday, April 12, and closes on Tuesday, June 1. For project details and to donate, please visit the URL: www.Patronicity.com/WPLBookBike.

The Friends of the Willimantic Public Library are calling on the community to join this initiative by donating to the crowdfunding campaign. Paquette says, "I'm thrilled that the Friends are supporting this effort and doing the work to make it happen. It wouldn't be possible otherwise." Merle Potchinsky, Chair of the Library's Board of Directors, is equally enthusiastic. She notes, "One of the most significant aspects of our Board's strategic plan is to reach out to our diverse Windham community in appealing, engaging, and yes, delightful, ways. This extraordinary book bike program will be so exciting to our children, so accessible to our less mobile elderly, and so convenient to our adult population. The Library can truly be out in the community where all of us are!"

If the campaign reaches its \$5,500 goal by the deadline of June 1, the project will receive a matching grant of \$5,500 from Sustainable CT's Community Match Fund, an innovative funding source for public,

community-led sustainability projects. The total budget of \$11,000 will cover most, if not all, the expenses of the Book Bike Program for one year.

Sustainable CT is an initiative of Eastern Connecticut State University's Institute for Sustainable Energy supports and recognizes sustainability efforts by towns and cities statewide. The Community Match Fund – supported by the Smart Seed Fund, Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, and Connecticut Green Bank – provides a dollar-for-dollar match to donations raised from the community, doubling total investment in projects. Anyone can lead a project and ideas can be proposed at any time. To do so, contact Sustainable CT at hilding-salorio@easternct.edu.

“Through the Community Match Fund, we aim to put residents at the forefront of creating positive, impactful change,” says Abe Hilding-Salorio, community outreach manager for Sustainable CT. Barbara Wright adds that “Windham became a participating community in Sustainable CT – and thus eligible for the match – thanks to the efforts of Dawn Niles and Jean de Smet. We’re very grateful.”