More than Books

Free Computer Classes for Adults

Shortly after starting work as the library's Adult Services Supervisor in 2008, Pat Vorwald began offering a series of four classes, "Computer Basics for the Beginner," just to see if there was any interest in really b-a-s-i-c training designed to introduce rank beginners to the world of computing. Within days of announcing the classes, Pat had a waiting list of more than 50 people.

Going on four years later, the series is still in demand. Pat has just unveiled an ambitious new schedule May through July classes that meet twice a week for two weeks, either 1 p.m. Monday and Wednesday afternoons or 9:30 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday mornings. That's twice a week for two weeks for a hands-on introduction to the following four topics:

- Computer Basics, understanding the machine and the terminology
- Internet Basics, navigating the World Wide Web, its pages and tools
- Word Basics, understanding the basics to creating documents
- E-mail Basics, establishing and using an e-mail account

The classes will be held in the library's second floor computer lab and last about an hour.

Make reservations in person at the library's second floor information desk or call the library at 815-233-3000 for more information. Classes will be filled on a first-come basis, and class size is limited to six people.

More about Pat

When I start talking about Pat Vorwald there are so many good and interesting things to say about her that it is only the 500-word limit on this column that will shut me up. Although Pat joined the library staff as Adult Services Supervisor in June, 2008, she actually began her library career here, in our venerable Carnegie Library, back in 1973.

Fresh out of the University of Iowa, with a Masters in Library Science, Pat (Goldsmith) accepted a full-time position as Assistant Librarian to then City Librarian John Locascio. For the next six years, in addition to offering professional reference to library users, Pat was the library innovator. She developed the library's large print collection and initiated outreach service to the homebound.

Pat resigned her full-time position in 1979 but continued to substitute at the library until 1988 when she joined Honeywell as an Informational Professional and co-manager of the Honeywell Business Information Center.

Pat was with Honeywell until 2001. Afterwards, at M45 Marketing Services, she continued to work on Honeywell accounts. She also served as M45's FHN special events coordinator for the Festival of Trees.

Pat was persuaded to return to full-time public library work, which she always maintains is her "first love." She admits she taken some surprising turns along the way to her present position. “All I ever aspired to be is a research librarian. I didn’t even turn on a computer until my 30s, and now I am teaching computer classes. As for technology, I usually left that up to others and came to it late.”

Tell that to the people who come here specifically for Pat’s help with their NOOKs, Kindles, and smart phones. Tell that to the people who rave about Pat’s introductory courses in computing.

Pat not only brings the benefits of her experience in business research at Honeywell and M45 to a public library clientele, she brings with her the abiding belief shared by so many of us in the profession that public libraries can and should be places of opportunity.

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