

Good evening. I am Kim Huffard, President of the Darien Library

I can think of a lot of ways to summarize the past 12 months, but I'm going to go with a pretty straightforward approach and say -- "Wow what a year!"

NEW BUILDING

As most people around town know, the biggest thing that happened this year is that we broke ground on the construction of our new building. Because the location at the corner of Post Road and Hecker Avenue is on a well-traveled path, I hope everyone has driven by and seen the progress. David Campbell, Chairman of the Building Committee, will come up here and give you a more detailed presentation on the new building, but I also want to say a couple of words about this very exciting project.

First, I would like to highlight for you what was a very moving ceremony for all of us involved with the Library. We had a gathering on Sunday, March 11 to celebrate the beginning of construction. It is always a pivotal moment for those who have worked so hard -- to finally see a project underway.

What was particularly moving was the attendance of Harold McGraw, Jr. For those of you who don't know, Harold first joined the Library's Board in October, 1951. Fittingly, Harold wielded the ceremonial shovel when they broke ground for this building in November 1956. As fellow trustee Sam Dorrance said, Harold "almost single-handedly got the library built." He was also President of the Library during the expansion in 1974 when the McGraw Children's Room was added. On March 11th of this year, Harold was once again present and holding the shovel as construction began for the new Darien Library.

We are thrilled to have Harold here with us tonight.

I also want to say a couple of words about the people that are making all of this happen -- the Building Committee. These people have given generously of their time, energy, and expertise. This project has

required countless hours from every one of them. And when I say countless, I mean it in the truest sense of the word, a number so large it is hard to count.

The building committee members have worked hard on the big thoughts to make sure we are building the best library we can. And they have worked hard on the small details, so our new building will work flawlessly for both the patrons and the staff.

I want to specifically thank David Campbell and Jenny Streeter who have been in the trenches on this project for the past year. I also want to thank Dot Kelly, who has certainly spent the better part of the year masterminding the environmental clean up of the site. To say the site was an environmental mess is an understatement. She has played an invaluable role, and I think everyone in town should thank her for her efforts in making this a better, cleaner place for all.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

You can't talk about the new building without discussing the Capital Campaign.

As many of you know, we started out several years ago with a thought, a hope, a wish about how much money we could raise in order to build this new library. We were in a continual dance about wanting to build the library that the people of Darien told us they wanted, but in the most cost efficient manner, since we really weren't sure how much money we could raise to build it.

After developing some preliminary designs and doing some rough cost estimates, George Wyper and I, co-chairs of the Capital Campaign, committed to raising \$24mm to build the New Darien Library. We may have been a little crazy, but make no mistake, we could have only considered this because of the generous support that the library has enjoyed from the Darien community for so many years.

With a committee behind us, we started out, seeking both large gifts and small. Our goal was obviously to raise \$24mm, but it was also to reach out to everyone that uses the library and encourage each of them to make a pledge. I am thrilled to report that as we sit here today, we have raised over \$23mm toward our goal.

We have been overwhelmed by the support we have received from so many. Clearly, to raise such a large sum, we needed some larger gifts to get us started. Luckily, there are many of you out there who love the Library and were very excited about the vision Louise and the staff had for the new building and you gave generously. However, equally as exciting is that fact that we now have almost 1,100 donors to this project.

We still have about \$1mm to raise before we open our doors in early 2009, so it is not too late for those of you who have not yet made a donation. Did I mention that in addition to being President, I am also co-chair of the Capital Campaign?

SALE OF THE BUILDING

A question that we have often been asked over the past year is what we plan to do with this building. As many of you know, we came to an agreement with the town of Darien to purchase this building and signed a contract in September. While I am not sure what the town plans to do with this site, I think you should expect some lively debate over the coming months as all the ideas are discussed. Stay tuned. We'll find out when you find out.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND LOUISE BERRY

It has been quite a year. Of course none of this could happen without the Board of Trustees or Louise Berry.

First a few words about our Board. Clearly you can't talk about the people who serve on this board without recognizing the fact that we stand on the shoulders of all the people that have come before us. However, that being said, I believe this board is unique. The people on

this board are not just overseeing this library – a large task in and of itself -- and a job they continue to do extremely well.

But, this board is also overseeing the building of a brand new Library. Anyone that agrees to serve on a Board during a building project is taking on a huge role. And, you couldn't be luckier to have this group overseeing the construction of a building that will stand for generations and have a very large impact on the town today and in the future.

LOUISE BERRY

When I said that I was pretty sure we would not be where we are without the Library Board, I am absolutely sure we would not be where we are without Louise Berry.

With her 28 years of experience, she is the driving force of this library as well as chief architect of the new building. She is the architect of the vision, and she is the architect of all the details that make this the library it is and will also ensure that the new library is as beloved as this one.

With her leadership, concern for patrons, striving to exceed everyone's expectations every day, and her ability to look to the future while never forgetting the past, I can only imagine what she will be able to achieve in our new building. Despite her 28 years as the leader of the best library in CT, I think she is just getting started.

Can we all take a moment to show our gratitude toward Louise.

We have had quite a year. And I will also say it is pretty clear we have some heavy lifting to do in the coming year. But we are excited to finally be at this point, where all our planning and designing and all the details are finally coming together.

It was in 2004, when then President George Wyper stood before you and said "here in the finest library we know, we begin to plan for the finest library we can conceive." It is three years later, and together, all

of us -- Friends, community members, the Library Board and Library staff -- are coming close to realizing that dream. I have a feeling I will be able to stand up here next year and start my remarks the same way as I did this year, "Wow, what a year!"

I now want to turn it over to Louise for her Director's Report.

As happens every year, we lose some great people and gain some others. This year is no exception.

I would like to first recognize Jim Duffy. Among his many contributions to the board, Jim led the charge on technology especially as it relates to the new building. Not an insignificant task when you are trying to build a library to work for today and for the many generations to come.

Next I would like to recognize Jenny Streeter. Jenny co-chaired the building committee with David Campbell. As I have already discussed, it almost hard to believe you can get anyone to agree to take on such a task. We were very lucky to have someone as experienced as Jenny leading the charge for us. She will certainly be missed.

The third person I want to recognize is Steve Thoma. Because of Steve's good governance instincts and thoughtfulness, he was a critical member of the Law and Policy Committee, Finance and Budget Committee and the Personnel Committee. This year he served as Vice President of the Board. Needless to say, this year as I guess every year, we had some very big issues and Steve's wise counsel certainly helped guide me and the rest of the board.