

# CHECK IT OUT

## Upper Skagit Library opens its virtual doors in new building.

By Jason Miller

After years of waiting and renovations, the Upper Skagit Library is settling into its new home, the former Heskett-Arnold American Legion Post 132 building in Concrete Town Center.

“It’s a beautiful space, a really nice place,” said library Board of Trustees Chair Jeff Maher. “It’s going to be really cool. I’m excited for our town.”

Library staff spent last month moving boxes and shelving and all manner of ancillary items into the space. They’re still unpacking and trying to get organized, said Library Programs Associate Chazlyn Lovely.

“The biggest difference in this building is the staff-only sections of it,” she said. “Before, we were essentially running a one-room library where staff areas and patron areas were one and the same, meaning patrons could overhear phone calls, which makes keeping things private very difficult. It’s nice for staff to have space where we can concentrate on our noncirculation duties.

“We also have a room where we can properly store and organize programming materials and use our laminator and sticker machines. It means we can efficiently use our space and know exactly what we have and where we have it, without searching through boxes. We can also expand our material offerings—more of everything and hopefully better organization of it all.”

### When will it open?

The question of when the library will open has more moving parts than one might expect. Staff is still unpacking, organizing, and trying to get a feel for how much space they’ll need for different tasks, as well as making decisions regarding where specific materials are located.

The library also has several items in its storage unit that were donated but not catalogued, waiting for the new building to give them a home. Any items that staff deem unnecessary will be donated to the Friends of the Upper Skagit Library Foundation for future book sales to help fund programs or other incidentals.

The other side of the coin is the pandemic. All of the staff just had their first round of vaccinations. By the end of April they will all have received their second doses.

But the Healthy Washington — Roadmap to Recovery guidelines don’t treat libraries exactly like restaurants and movie theaters under Phase 3.

“While other businesses are opening up to larger capacities and more services, we’re still a little more strict with how many patrons we can allow inside, how long they can stay inside, what they can and can’t do, and what rules staff and patrons have to follow,” said Lovely.

“We miss having patrons inside the building—we really do—but this is a good opportunity to keep the doors closed a little longer to help us finish putting everything away. Once we reopen for

in-person visits, everything should look great and patrons will have access to more materials, services, and programs than ever. We’ll really be bigger and better at the end of this,” she said.

### Hopes and dreams

The new library has a dedicated children’s room and a dedicated young adult/teen section—a huge addition, in Lovely’s opinion. “Now they’ll be able to dance and play and learn kinetically without bothering other patrons during Storytime. And I’m really excited about the young adult/teen section, because teens especially haven’t had programming or space dedicated to them in the past.”

“My vision—and I know this holds true for Loly and Tina as well—is that the library is a community hub where people come to spend time together, where great ideas are imagined and enacted, and sometimes books and movies go home with people for a time,” said Lovely. “A library is more than books. It’s a learning center. It’s an entertainment center. It’s a place to see your friends or meet new ones. It’s a place to get out of the weather. A library can be the heart of a community, and that’s what I want ours to be.”

*Editor’s note: The Upper Skagit Library has a new phone number: 360.853.7716.*



**Upper Skagit Library Programs Associate Chazlyn Lovely** wheels a cart into the new library building in Concrete Town Center on March 4. Lovely and other staff spent last month transferring books and equipment from the library’s previous location, which adjoined the East County Resource Center on Main St.



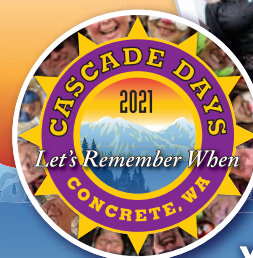
**This photo from March 19, 2017**, shows the stripped-down former American Legion Hall, which was remodeled to house the Upper Skagit Library. A local benefactor bought the building in 2016, remodeled it (“for temporary use,” according to an Upper Skagit Library Task Force Report), then donated it to the library in 2017. From 2018 through February 2021, the library continued to remodel the space “for permanent use,” according to the report.

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This project received funding from Skagit County. [www.VisitSkagitValley.com](http://www.VisitSkagitValley.com)