

O'Neill Public Library Hosts How-to-Find-Law Open House With Judge Alan Brodbeck



O'NEILL ATTORNEY Forrest Peetz (left) and Judge Alan Brodbeck (right) present library director Becky Cemper with READ poster of Nebraska's Chief Justice for the library.

The O'Neill Public Library hosted an open house and education session for the public and members of the legal community on June 14.

Library patrons were invited to tour the new computer technology at the library and learn about Nebraska courts' web-based legal resources. Library director Becky Cemper hosted Judge Alan Brodbeck, county judge of the 8th Judicial District and Mary Jo Ryan from the Nebraska Library Commission who both talked about the importance of public libraries' contribution to successful, thriving communities.

According to Judge Brodbeck, "Today we are experiencing a tremendous revolution of how people receive information and knowledge. More and more we transition to electronic information instead of just paper. Our libraries are adapting to that change. But that change requires computers, the Internet, and broadband access."

Ms. Ryan stated that the O'Neill Public Library was awarded new computers, furniture, and upgraded broadband internet access worth more than \$24,000. Increasing internet capacity and speed was one of the new upgrades, which allows library customers to access larger video and educational files over the web. These new library resources were gained through a grant under a Nebraska Library Commission project "Library Broadband Builds Nebraska Communities." The project is part of a three-year grant designed to upgrade public computing resources in libraries and advance rural and

urban access to employment, learning, health information and eGovernment services. The public library project is funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and matching funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Judge Brodbeck added to the discussion saying, "Change is not limited to libraries. The court system is undergoing vast changes in the way courts deliver services, especially when it comes to electronic record keeping, electronic filing of pleadings and easier access by the public to court records." He continued, "By combining the court's need to provide the public with greater access to the courts and the Library Commission's development of a system to provide that type of access, a natural alliance developed between the Court system and the Library Commission. The Court is continually updating its Web site to provide new and expanded information for citizens to have better access to legal resources and their own court cases."

The Nebraska Supreme Court Web site (www.supremecourt.ne.gov/self-help) contains a wealth of information. From the court's Web site individuals can check on court schedules, pay tickets, and do online court case searches. People can also obtain free access to legal information including instructions and forms for different legal matters such as small claims, name changes, power of attorney, requests for adoption records, protection orders, custody or divorce, and court appeals.

Another e-government Web site that was highlighted was the official Nebraska state Web site: Nebraska.gov. From this site Nebraskans can renew drivers' licenses or license plates, buy hunting licenses or find health care providers . . . all from the quiet and comfort of a chair at the local public library.

Following the open house, the library sponsored an educational session called "Navigating the Waters of Legal Information and Self-Help for Library Patrons" where librarians and court staff from surrounding communities attended a one-hour seminar.

Educators Janet Bancroft, Nebraska Supreme Court Public Information Officer and Debora Brownyard, director of Dispute Resolution and Special Court Projects were joined by Judge Alan Brodbeck, Clerk Magistrate Laura Reynoldson and O'Neill attorney Forrest Peetz for a discussion of legal needs across Holt County and within the O'Neill community. Participants reviewed the Judicial Branch Legal Self-Help Web page and other online resources designed to assist people representing themselves in Nebraska courts.

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