

Discovery Bus

By: Fay Gardner

The Discovery Bus comes to Jackson County. The Jackson County Public Library's former Bookmobile was purchased in 1996. We started having mechanical problems with it in 1997. As a part of a long-range plan written in 2000, we set aside money in the library capital projects fund's future allocations to purchase a new outreach services vehicle in 2006. Due to tax shortfalls over the years, we purchased a new vehicle in 2007.

In October 2006, Outreach Services Manager Fay Gardner and Library Administrator Mary Reed went to the Association for Rural & Small Libraries annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. After seeing many bookmobiles on display there, Reed and Gardner narrowed their choice down to two vehicles that would suit our needs more than others would: one by Matthews Specialty Vehicles, Inc. and one by Moroney Bookmobiles. Other vendors on display were Farber Specialty Vehicles, Inc. and Ohio Bus. Not many companies manufacture bookmobiles.

In January 2007, Gardner, Reed and Information Technology Specialist Jason Boyer formed a committee to investigate and purchase a new Outreach Services vehicle. Based on available capital projects fund allocations, they set a \$170,000 budget. Due to the size of our existing garage at the Seymour Library, the basic size was to be no greater than 28 feet long, 9 feet wide, and 11 feet 3 inches high (including air conditioners).

Gardner began by calling some libraries that were given as references at the conference for the various vehicle vendors, and she e-mailed other libraries with questions about their bookmobiles. The committee traveled an hour's distance to see



The Discovery Bus

one vehicle by Matthews in New Albany, IN. The committee liked the way the inside looked; the wooden shelving gave it a warm feeling.

Boyer worked on technology specifications, and Reed wrote an RFP (Request for Proposal) based on committee recommendations and sent it to all four-bookmobile companies.

The library received quotes from the four vendors. The board discussed the quotes received, and on Administrator Mary Reed's recommendation, voted to accept Moroney's quote of \$132,140.

The reason we chose Moroney over the other vendors:

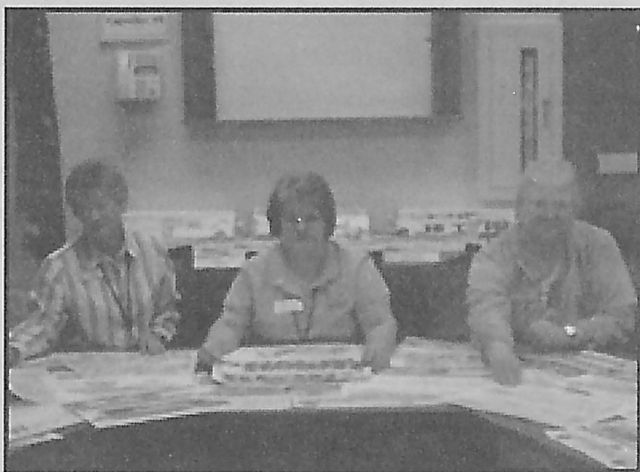
- The price
- The people at Moroney
- Positive references
- Oak plywood shelving
- Wheelchair lift
- Freightliner MT 55 chassis

- Cummins engine
- Onan quiet diesel generator
- Backup camera with monitor
- Air ride seats
- Eight speakers
- PA system

After the board made a decision on the vendor, a full-scale design and naming contest took place in late 2007. Our previous three vehicles were named the Bookmobile, but we were interested in seeing what other names the community would suggest.

Letters were sent to all schools and daycares in the library district to design and/or name the new Outreach Services vehicle. Flyers were also distributed to the Seymour, Crothersville, and Medora libraries and on the Bookmobile. The design deadline was November 1, 2007.

Two hundred thirty-one children, including entire classrooms, and adults participated with their own designs, and 271 names were proposed for consideration. We received many cute flat layout or 3D designs, from tie-dyed to a camouflaged unit that said, "GIT-R-DONE."



Outreach Services staff Norma Prewitt, Fay Gardner and former assistant Phyllis Olmstead with some of the entries.

After much deliberation between Reed, Gardner, and Library Director Julia Aker, the winning designer was Courtnee Howard of Crothersville, who designed the "Leap Into Reading" frog graphic on the driver's side of the vehicle, and the name winner was Jake Pennington of Seymour for "Discovery Bus." They each received a \$50 savings bond,

courtesy of Irwin Union and National City banks. The "On the Road to Reading" design on the entry side was a compilation of several entries as well as artwork by Gardner.

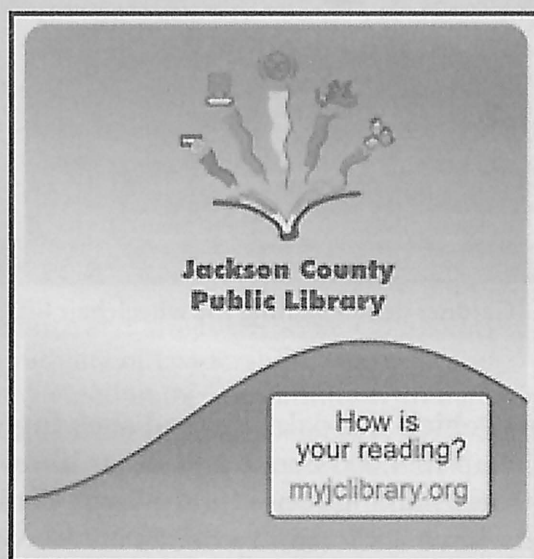
Matt Fitzwater, husband of our Administrative Assistant Rhonda Fitzwater, from Clear Spring Design volunteered his services to put the designs of the contest winners onto a computer printout that eventually became the graphic vinyl wrap for the Discovery Bus.



Entry Side



Driver's Side



Back Side, Designed by Fitzwater



We used our public address system during the Discovery Bus grand opening at a fundraiser for the local child-care network and homeless shelter on June 7, 2008.

The disabled access and safety features are important aspects of the new vehicle. Customers appreciate the wheelchair lift, which makes it possible for disabled people to visit the Discovery Bus. We also use the lift to cart books on and off the Bus.



Gardner demonstrating the wheelchair lift.

The new vehicle has oak plywood shelving which can hold up to 4,000 books and other library materials. After making room for the large books, we currently have 3,852 library books on the vehicle. This gives outreach customers a larger choice, because the Bookmobile only held 2,000 books.

The thing the staff likes best is wireless internet service. They can now access customer records at the time of checkout, place holds, pay fines and register new users. None of this was available on the previous vehicle.



Gardner demonstrates the checkout station.

It has a Cummins engine and has an Onan quiet diesel generator. The staff appreciates that the generator runs very quietly when using the lights and air conditioning during stops.

Because the Discovery Bus stops where many children are present, there are many safety features, including a camera and monitor for backing up the bus.

The Discovery Bus staff includes Outreach Services Manager Fay Gardner, who works full-time Monday through Friday; Assistant Norma Prewitt, who works eight hours on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; and Assistant Staci Eglen, who works eight hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

The Discovery Bus is on the road Monday through Thursday rotating the schedule every two weeks. It is off the road on Fridays for routine maintenance and decorating the Discovery Bus. From Monday through Thursday, we visit over 50 different places with most stops lasting thirty minutes to an hour.

We provide services to those who are not able to make it to the library on their own at a variety of locations: two apartment complexes, 18 daycares, five nursing homes/assisted living centers, one mobile home park, four rural community housing additions, 11 homebound customers, one developmental industry, one juvenile detention center, seven preschools and seven schools.

The new Discovery Bus allows us to provide better service to those who need us. One of our goals is to get children excited about reading at an early age. The children at the daycare homes are excited to see us. We always sing two songs: "Library Song" by Tom Chapin at the beginning of our visit and "Skinnamarink" by Sharon Lois and Bram at the end of the visit. Between songs, we read the story of the week. After the story, the children select books and get their hands stamped.



Daycare visitors to the Discovery Bus.



Gardner with the lift in motion.



Gardner shutting the shelves that were moved to open the lift.

Outreach Services is very pleased to be able to continue providing a needed service for our community. We hope The Discovery Bus will help us do that for several years.

Jackson County Public Library

www.myjclibrary.org

Outreach Services

<http://www.myjclibrary.org/services/outreach/>

Discovery Bus Schedule

<http://www.myjclibrary.org/services/outreach/textOnly.asp>



Biography: Fay Gardner

Gardner has worked at the Jackson County Public Library since September 9, 1989. After serving as Bookmobile assistant, she was promoted to Outreach Services Manager on August 27, 1990. She has served on panel discussions at two ILF District VI Conferences, one state Bookmobile

Conference and one ILF Annual Conference. She is a 2001 graduate of Leadership Jackson County. Gardner has helped in the community with the United Way Day of Caring since October 7, 1997. Gardner also represented the Library on the Seymour Chamber Commerce Beautification Committee for two years. You may contact her at fgardner@myjclibrary.org or at Jackson County Public Library, 303 West 2nd Street Seymour, IN. 47274 (812) 522-3412x234