



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young attends the Grand Opening at the Almond Library

CATHARINE YOUNG October 13, 2008

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Almond residents get a lift at library

By Bob Clark

Louis Reitnauer is the first person in a wheelchair to use the Almond 20th Century Club Library's new elevator Friday. Posing in the elevator with him are, from left, state Sen. Catharine Young, R-Olean, and Tammy Kokot, director of the Almond library.

By Bob Clark

The Evening Tribune

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Almond, N.Y. - Almond residents have enjoyed using the local library for years, according to Director Tammy Kokot.

The only problem with the Almond 20th Century Club Library was access for older or handicapped visitors, with 13 steps blocking the way for many.

But that all changed recently, she said, with the addition of a \$65,000 elevator the library officially opened Friday.

“I have been watching my older people literally pulling themselves up on the railings,” Kokot said. “I don’t mind helping them up and down to their cars, but I was worried someone would slip and fall.”

Kokot went to Albany to lobby for some elevator funds from state Sen. Catharine Young, R-Olean, who secured a \$20,000 earmark for the project in the state budget.

Young was on hand Friday for the dedication ceremony, praising local libraries for their dedication and accessibility to rural residents.

“Rural communities are the hearts and centers of their communities,” Young said. “I have been fighting for libraries since I was first elected.”

Along with Young’s earmark, the library also received \$32,000 from a \$14 million state capital improvement earmark from the Southern Tier Library System.

“That is only available for building a new library or upgrading a current one,” Kokot said. “It’s not for books or materials or anything like that.”

And then there was the help from the local community, which raised \$12,000 for the project.

“This is certainly a community library,” Kokot said. “It was a huge undertaking for the community.”

If any of the pieces had not come together, Kokot said, the elevator would not have been possible.

“We could not have done \$32,000 (of fundraising) on our own,” she said.

According to Kokot, construction began on the elevator began in April and wrapped up late last month.

“We walked around in a blanket of dust,” she said, adding there was no real break in the library’s operation for the construction.

The first person in a wheelchair to use the new lift Friday was Louis Reitnauer, a former town justice who had not been in the library for more than 20 years.

“It’s been an awful long time,” he said. “The people of Almond did a great job.”

Reitnauer said he did not spend much time in the library before, but now that he can get in and out easier, he expects his visits to be more frequent.

“Oh yeah, especially with my wife,” he said. “She goes through three or four books a week.”