



**SOCCER**

Girls team bolsters its roster in hopes of increasing competitiveness, Page 9



**BASKETBALL**

Holden Arnaman earns All-State honors, Page 9

# WEST BRANCH TIMES

Established in 1875 • West Branch is the birthplace of President Herbert Hoover, the Great Humanitarian & Home of the Bears

Volume 147, No. 12

Thursday, March 23, 2023

\$1.00

## Participation, visits jump at WB's library

Program attendance puts WBPL above larger towns

By Gregory R. Norfleet  
gregory.norfleet@westbranchtimes.com

Patrons flocked back to West Branch Public Library after coronavirus concerns abated, with a report showing that program attendance and total visits increased dramatically over the past year.

Program attendance jumped by nearly 37 percent between 2021 and 2022, and total library visits shot up by 750 percent, according to the annual report, which came out in November.

Program attendance fell for four straight years starting in 2018. The library continued to host programs virtually during the pandemic, but the 9,449 people who took part in 2017 dropped 35 percent to 6,176 in 2021.

Yet after the library reopened, program attendance rose to 8,456 in 2022, an increase that covered the losses of the three previous years and then some.

"Programming is always big for us and it popped back up" after the pandemic, he said.

When he said "big," he

means in comparison to other libraries that serve a similar population.

West Branch had been a "C"-sized library — serving populations between 1,000 and 2,500 people. But the recent census moved West Branch up to a "D"-sized library serving between 2,500 and 5,000.

C-sized libraries typically draw about 2,000 participants in their programming; D-sized draw an average of 3,000 participants.

West Branch, however, counted 8,258 participants in the past year.

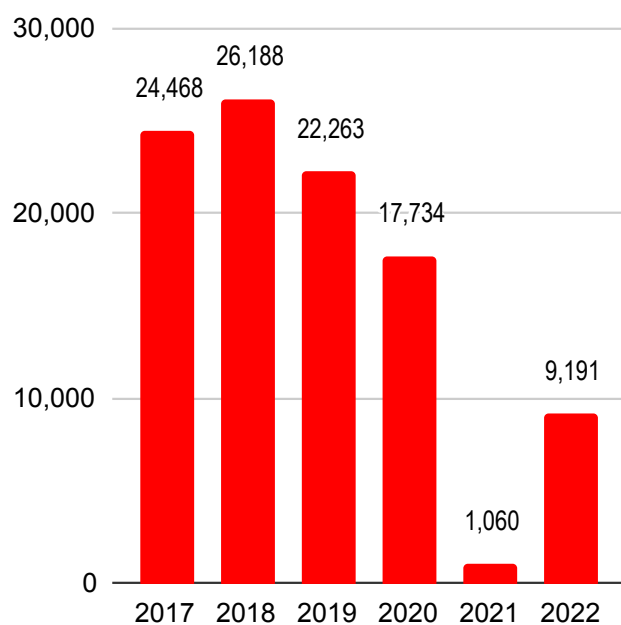
That's more than an "E"-sized library — about 6,500 participants — serving populations of 5,000 to 10,000. By comparison, "F"-sized libraries usually draw about 10,000 participants from populations between 10,000 and 25,000.

Total visits saw a more dramatic bounce. In 2018, the library recorded 26,188 visits over 12 months. That dropped by 32.3 percent over the next two years. But in 2021, it bottomed out at 1,060 visits, a 96-percent drop from 2018.

Library Page 2

### Visits

The number of people who visited West Branch Public Library, by year.



Source: West Branch Public Library Annual Report 2022  
Chart by Gregory R. Norfleet



### I-80 set to divert traffic again

Workers with Progressive Structure of Elkader place panels March 16 in preparation for pouring concrete on the new Wapsi Avenue bridge over Interstate 80. It took three tries to get around snowy and icy weather, but on Feb. 22 and March 1 the company placed the first and second sets of four beams for the bridge over Interstate 80. The Iowa Department of Transportation initially set the beam placements for Feb. 16 and 17. With this done, the next step is diverting traffic to make way for reconstructing the westbound lanes of I-80. IDOT Resident Construction Engineer Adrian Simonson said recently that, depending on the weather, workers will shift westbound traffic to share the eastbound lanes in early April. That includes closing the westbound ramps at Herbert Hoover Highway/F44. Gregory R. Norfleet/West Branch Times



Subway's Madison Hovancik prepares a sandwich Saturday during the soft opening for Subway. The Jedlicka family chose West Branch for its fifth franchise of the popular sandwich shop. Gregory R. Norfleet/West Branch Times

## Subway's soft opening leads to packed house

West Branch sandwich shop fifth for Jedlicka family

By Gregory R. Norfleet  
gregory.norfleet@westbranchtimes.com

Word spread quickly for Subway's soft opening on Saturday and the crowds

started showing up a half hour before opening time.

Franchise owner Chad Jedlicka and wife Julie greeted diners starting at 4:30 p.m. for the 5-7 p.m. sneak peek.

When this reporter arrived around 6 p.m., diners occupied almost every one of the 41 seats.

"The staff was a little overwhelmed, but it's been great," Chad said.

This is Jedlicka's fifth Subway location. Others are in Iowa City, Tipton, Solon, and Riverside.

Manager Pam Devore

Subway Page 8

## More fundraisers for Pedersen family

Son says football coach needs prayers to restart chemotherapy

By Gregory R. Norfleet  
gregory.norfleet@westbranchtimes.com

West Branch will host more fundraisers for the Butch Pedersen family as the head football coach continues his cancer fight.

And the latest word from

the Pedersen family is that the coach's white blood cells need to increase before chemotherapy begins again.

Son Lance Pedersen said he has heard that thousands of people are praying for his father.

"Prayer matters and my

family and I want to thank all of you for your prayers," Lance wrote Monday in a Caring Bridge post.

As for fundraisers, the Down Under will give 20 percent of its sales on the night of Friday, March 24, to the Pedersen family.

The restaurant will also provide live music to entertain its diners.

On Saturday, March 25, a Bake for Butch fundraiser will funnel the work of multiple cooks into one bake sale at West Branch

Pedersen Page 8



Butch Pedersen

