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## **LIBRARY BOOK LOCKERS SERVING SHARPSBURG, BLAWNOX**

**FOX CHAPEL, PA** – Cooper-Siegel (CSCL) and Sharpsburg Community Libraries (SCL) expanded their services Wednesday, with the addition of Library Book Pickup Lockers in two municipalities.

Funded through an Allegheny County Regional Asset District (RAD) Transformative Community Library Fund Grant, the lockers are designed to offer convenient, 24/7 access for library patrons in underserved communities.

Located in Sharpsburg and Blawnox, the lockers allow all Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) card holders to access an entire catalog of resources from both libraries via the contactless, free lockers.

Library staff, RAD representatives, local, county and state legislators hosted two ceremonial ribbon cuttings Wednesday to kick off the new program. The first highlighted the locker located outside SCL, where operating hours are limited, and the second took place in the Jersey Mike's Plaza in Blawnox.

CSCL Executive Director Jill McConnell said library staff and information technology specialists, eiNetwork, put "a lot of effort into getting these lockers up and running" in the last few months.

"It's very rewarding to see an idea become a reality like this. I can't wait to see the public's reaction to them," McConnell said. "The pickup lockers will make library materials more accessible to community members who have trouble getting to our locations during our regular operating hours. They also provide a way for us to extend library services beyond our buildings to the people who need them the most."

The Smiota-brand lockers have become popular among library networks nationwide for their unique offerings, including contactless pickups; secure, 72-hour holds; space-saving convenience; and round-the-clock accessibility.

SCL Branch Manager Sara Mariacher said the lockers will help "fill in the gaps" of the libraries' existing patron services.

"Our hours don't always align with our patrons' needs, so these lockers will allow them to utilize the library in ways they couldn't usually do. Some portions of our service area don't have easily accessible public transit routes," Mariacher said. "Blawnox has never had a physical library

presence. For those residents who may not have time or access to our two libraries, this will allow them to be able to enjoy books, movies and other library materials more easily. Patrons can now request their library materials be delivered to a locker instead of a library building, allowing them to pick up materials at their convenience, instead of within library operating hours.”

The lockers are just one part of a larger project to better serve patrons, Mariacher added. The remainder of the \$78,324 RAD grant is for SCL courtyard renovations, facility upgrades for programming purposes, and a recently completed Community Needs Survey – the results of which may lead to restructuring of library operating hours.

Introduced in 2022, RAD’s Transformative Community Library Fund is an invitation-only grant program for eligible libraries in distressed communities. As the largest library funder in the Pittsburgh region, RAD typically awards grants to projects focused on programming, partnerships and plans to strengthen the future of Allegheny County’s public libraries. RAD’s library fund awarded more than \$4 million in grants from its inception, through December 2024.

“We are so grateful to RAD for providing the funding for this project, and to plaza owner Tony Martini for giving us space at his shopping center in Blawnox for the lockers there. We could not have gotten this done without their support and partnership,” McConnell said. “We are excited to bring this new service to our communities and welcome any feedback from patrons who use it.”

The Sharpsburg locker is located outside the Sharpsburg Community Library at 1212 Main Street, while the Blawnox locker is located at 171 Freeport Road, next to the Jersey Mike’s restaurant.

Monroeville Public Library is donating a book drop receptacle to the project, which will soon be installed next to the Blawnox lockers for convenient book returns. Additionally, Jersey Mike’s owner, Roshan Patel, and manager, Matt Mamros, donated catering boxes to ribbon cutting attendees.

To learn more about the new Library Book Pickup Lockers or RAD, visit [www.smiota.com/library](http://www.smiota.com/library) or [www.radworkshere.org](http://www.radworkshere.org), respectively.

For more information about Cooper-Siegel or Sharpsburg community libraries, including upcoming programming, visit [www.coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org](http://www.coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org).

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