



Roxanne with staff members Alex and Sarah during one of the library's children's program activities

Meet Roxanne Leyes, Director of the Montour Falls Library...

1. Describe Your Business:

The Montour Falls Library is an association public library located inside a beautiful historic brick building on Main Street in Montour Falls, NY. The building itself was built in 1864 and originally housed the Bank of the Chemung Canal. It was converted into a library at the turn of the century and has been such ever since. The Library acts as a central hub in Schuyler County and its surrounding areas. We strive to meet the needs of the community, the county, and the patrons who visit us every day. This involves more than

maintaining a current and relevant collection for checkout. The library offers programs for people of all ages ranging from the Roulette Blowers Gasparian Early Literacy Program, to our crafty Upcycle Society, to the new Havana Art Series, all of which offer something different for those who take advantage of it. The library hosts a variety of art classes, cultural and historic events, health and wellness workshops, and so much more, thanks to grant funding and continued support from the community.

2. Tell us your story:

My background is in horticulture and I operated a local nursery business called Winsome Winds which ran at the Ithaca Farmers Market for 40 years, as well as other local markets. I started as the Library Director on January 1, 2010 and was a volunteer before that. I remember bringing my daughter to the Montour Falls Library shortly after she finished up her degree in Library Information Sciences and back then, the library wasn't heavily used and wasn't open nearly as much due to a lack of funding. I was attracted not only to the historic value of the institution, but the potential it had to offer Schuyler County. Libraries today play a vital role in community development and having never been able to work within the county that I lived, this was a driving force in my decision to step up as Director.

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

The best means for success is to pay attention to what goes on around you. When other businesses and organizations are doing well, it is important to visit those organizations, create partnerships and network with people who can help make the work you do more credible. I learned that I didn't need to reinvent the wheel to bring people into the library. It took great attention to detail and patience but now the institution thrives. It has not been a quick nor easy process but over the years I've been able to create change and invest in a staff that is well-rounded, capable, and eager to come to work each day.

4. What inspires you?

When I was young, I always thought that I'd join the Peace Corps when I turned 60. It was a dream of mine to be able to give back to the community. Life is not always what you expect. I've always been passionate about Literacy, particularly Early Literacy and working with children. When I visited this library I saw the need for both of these things and realized that this was my chance to give back on a local level.

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

The biggest challenge we face is how to do so much with so little: there is so much need in Schuyler County and not nearly enough time or willing hands to make it all happen. Libraries have changed significantly over the last ten years and now aim to fill the social, economic, and educational gaps within a community by providing services that we never have before. This requires more qualified staff members, more open hours of operation, more one-on-one attention with our patrons, and more involvement from individuals who have the platform needed to make progress.

6. What is your favorite local activity?

I love to be outdoors. I live on Connecticut Hill so I enjoy walking, hiking, and gardening. I also love all kinds of world music and attend the Grassroots Festival every year to relax and spend time with family and friends.

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

My passion for community development is strong. I also coordinate the Montour Falls Farmers' Market as a volunteer. My goal is to contribute wherever I can to bring people together, enhance sustainability, and support local businesses.