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October, 2010

Libraries are the cornerstone of our communities, providing the old and young alike with the opportunity to read and do research using material that may not be available to them through any other venue. Historically, the first library in Cheektowaga was provided by the Urban Family, at the George Urban Estate, on Pine Ridge Road. As far back as the late 1800's, the understanding of the need for free access to books was realized by one of the more influential families in Cheektowaga. Small community libraries followed over the years and were opened in various locations throughout the town. For example, as a child, I can remember visiting one that was located on Walden and Randolph almost daily.

Through the efforts of Dr. Victor Reinstein and Julia Boyer Reinstein, the Anna Reinstein Memorial Library, named for his mother, who was one of the first woman doctors in Buffalo, was opened on Harlem Road. Later, branch libraries were opened on William Street and Maryvale Drive and then the beautiful Julia Boyer Reinstein Library, on Losson Road. Over the past few years, the libraries on William and Maryvale have been closed. Now, with his recently released budget, Erie County Executive Chris Collins is virtually proposing the closing of the library on Harlem Road by reducing the hours there to 16 per week. The proposed budget is also reducing hours at the Julia Boyer Reinstein Library.

Following release of this information, one of the County Library directors said rather flippantly that the public could go to the library on East Delevan near Bailey. This is anywhere from 3 to 10 miles away for those who use our libraries regularly and our two remaining branches show sustainable usage. In 2009, over 160,000 visits were made at the Julia Boyer Reinstein Library on Losson Road and almost 114,000 visited the Anna Reinstein Library. This year, between January and September, approximately 127,400 visited the library on Losson Road and 103,300 have been to the Anna Reinstein Library.

If you want to talk money, Cheektowaga taxpayers have been taxed by Erie County to the tune of \$1,985,856 for library services but, the County budget for operating Cheektowaga's libraries was just under \$1.3 million and with the proposed budget cutting hours, we will be reduced to a \$591,492. As the owner of the library buildings, the Town of Cheektowaga is also responsible for their maintenance, not the County. Additionally, \$383,000 was invested, last year, for improvements at the Anna Reinstein Memorial Library utilizing available federal and state grant opportunities and with the Town working in conjunction with the County. Now this library would for the most part be closed to the public that funded the improvements.

As we emphasize the need for education in our country, the last thing we need to do is destroy the library system. Not every home has a computer and not all families can afford to purchase books at Amazon or Borders. Libraries were recognized by our forefathers, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, as an important part of our society. As we move on through this electronic age, we must realize that they are not obsolete.