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A new chapter: Shelburne Library CEO of 17 years to soon retire

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The page is turning, and a new chapter is set to begin for the Shelburne Public Library.

Rose Dotten, chief executive officer (CEO) for the local library, will be retiring from the position after 17 years in the role.

?Being here has been a blessing in my life,? said Dotten as she held back tears. ?I love this place, and I put a lot of energy and care into it. This library has been a labour of love, rather than just a job.?

Originally from the Shelburne community, Dotten went to Western University, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree and eventually went on to receive a Bachelor of Education and a Master of Library Science.

Before joining the Shelburne Public Library, Dotten had a multi-decade-long career in teaching. In the mid-90s, she served as the principal of a librarianship course at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). During her time with OISE, Dotten was contracted to help build libraries in Bermuda, Trinidad, and Belgium.

In Bermuda specifically, she helped instruct 21 teacher librarians over a three-year span and also assisted in the building of five school libraries.

?I had to design the whole library from scratch. Where everything would go, set up the internet, the book circulation system, and I ended up buying the books in Canada,? explained Dotten.

Dotten eventually moved on to become the librarian at the University of Toronto Schools (UTS), a secondary school for gifted students that is affiliated with the University of Toronto.

In 2008, Dotten saw a newspaper ad for the library position and decided to apply for the job. Dotten was hired to replace the then-head librarian, Mary Lynne Armstrong, who retired after running the library for 20 years.

?She was very community-minded, and it was such an easy transition because I feel I'm community-minded,? she said.

While like-mindedness helped to ease the transition, the change didn't come without challenges for Dotten.

?I wasn't trained as a public librarian, so coming to a small town, there was a learning curve to become a public librarian,? said Dotten.

Coming to the Shelburne Public Library 17 years ago, Dotten recalled, at the time, they had no website or internet. She would go on to hire a website creator, who developed the existing Shelburne Public Library, and would get a grant to install the internet.

While there are many moments over the 17 years that Dotten feels proud of, one of the biggest milestones she brings up from her time as CEO of the Shelburne Public Library is winning the TD Summer Reading Club.

The TD Summer Reading Club is a nationwide free program for kids of all ages and abilities that looks to encourage a lifelong love of reading during the summer.

?They phoned up one day and said, ?You're in the top nominees for this award. Is there any chance you can come out to Saskatoon'.

They didn't say anything else,? recalled Dotten. ?So, all of a sudden, I'm sitting there and they announce Shelburne ? first prize. It was such a moment.?

Shelburne Public Library won the TD Summer Reading Club in 2016 and 2019, and placed third in the 2025 challenge.

?I'm proud that it was under my sort of time here that we did that and our team put it all together,? Dotten said.

Reflecting back on her time with the Shelburne Public Library, Dotten is humble about her part in how the library has changed and grown. Instead, she points to her team of staff members and board members as the key to the library's successes.

?I have a great team here and we could never do the things we do without them,? said Dotten.

After 17 years with the Shelburne Public Library, Dotten said her decision to close the book on this chapter of her career came organically.

?It was a decision I made with no external pressure or forces. I just made the decision one day ?I think I'm going to retire,'? she said.

In her retirement, Dotten plans to get back into crafting, including weaving and fiber arts, as well as take up woodworking.

Dotten will also be taking on a volunteer position as a member of the UTS Alumni Board of Directors.

?It's about having time for myself and doing some of these things,? said Dotten. ?I know I'm going to miss my messy office and I'm going to miss the people, but I'm looking forward to it.?

Taking over as the new CEO of the Shelburne Public Library is Shannon McGrady, who has spent the last 12 years as a staff member of the Orangeville Public Library.

Dotten's official last day at the Shelburne Public Library will be Oct. 18.