

Gathering cans and bottles, woman works to help library

'One person can make a difference'

By Paula Owen, Correspondent

FITCHBURG — Mary Anne K. Guichard, known as "Guich," doesn't like to see things thrown away, especially not an opportunity to help.

Ms. Guichard, 61, lives on a fixed income, she said, and recently moved into an apartment at Anwelt Heritage Apartments on Oak Hill Road. She noticed that other tenants were throwing away returnable bottles and cans in the recycling areas on each floor.

As a Friends of the Library member, Ms. Guichard said, she knew the library was hurting financially and just put two and two together. She checked with Anwelt management and at the end of November placed three bins to collect returnables in the recycling areas of her building, each marked "For the Fitchburg Public Library."

Seven thousand cans and bottles later, she has helped raise more than \$330 for the library and is on a crusade to help the library get its accreditation back.

"I would like to see someone else at the Sundial or Wallace Towers do what I did," she said. "One person can make a difference. It snowballs. I'd like to buy back one day for the library to be open, and then maybe the city could find enough money for another, and we could get accreditation back."

People who found out what she is trying to do started dropping bottles and cans off to her, she said, and drop-off locations have been established around the city. She goes around her building on a scooter and collects the bottles, sometimes twice a day, then takes them to the redemption center.

In the middle of each month, Ms. Guichard sends a check made out to the Friends of the Library, she said. She does it that way because money sent directly to the library would go into the city's general fund. Her lowest monthly total was \$9.95 in November, she said, and her highest was \$51 in February.

"I live on a fixed income," said Ms. Guichard, a Fitchburg native. "You don't think I could use \$332? I could. I truly could, but the thought of the library closing breaks my heart."

"I spent hours and hours at the library over the years, sometimes begrudgingly," she said. "All my generation did. In the old days when you had papers to do, you didn't have a computer. You went to the library. It was open seven days a week back then. This is my way of saying thank you."

For more information on the recycling effort, call Ms. Guichard at (978) 400-7721.

