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SUPERVOLUNTEER WAS A FRIEND OF THE STARS

Fredi McComb had a thing for music — and some well-known men had a thing for Fredi, who died two days before Christmas at 83. Fredi was a fixture at Victoria music events where she took her famous baked goods to share with visiting musicians, including Wynton Marsalis, Dave Brubeck, Pat Metheny and Holly Cole. In the 1950s, she worked at Toronto's Jupiter Theatre box office where she got to know young actors such as Lorne Greene, William Shatner and Christopher Plummer. > Arts, D6

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FAMILY 4-1-1: New girls' toys rebuild images of play >D1



RICK STEVES: To Hebron, tense and holy city >C3

HOMES: 2014 trends — cool hues, bold graphics >E1

Three escape raging city house fire



ANNE RICHES

The upper suite of a house on Empire Street in Victoria is engulfed in flames on Friday afternoon. Three residents, who were home when the fire started, narrowly escaped the blaze. Story, page A3

Dozens search park for woman

KATIE DeROSA
Times Colonist

A sprawling search is underway for a woman believed to be missing in East Sooke Regional Park.

About 50 people combed the park by air, sea and ground for the 59-year-old East Sooke woman on Thursday night and all day Friday.

The search, expected to resume today, started late Thursday night after the woman's husband discovered her car in the Aylard Farm parking lot of the rugged regional park, said Sooke RCMP Staff Sgt. Steve Wright. Her cellphone and purse were left in the vehicle.



FAMILY PHOTO
Search on for woman, 59.

The husband last saw his wife around lunch time on Thursday and he knew she'd be going for a walk but expected her home around dinner time.

By 11 p.m. Thursday, Juan de Fuca search and rescue volunteers were on the ground and searched into the night. That night, there was heavy rain and strong winds, and the temperatures dropped to near freezing, Wright said.

On Friday, dozens more search and rescue volunteers arrived from Nanaimo, Cowichan Valley, Salt Spring Island and Port Alberni. They covered a three-kilometre radius from the parking lot, Wright said.

An RCMP helicopter searched from the air and a Royal Canadian Marine search and rescue boat scoured the water and shoreline.

"The family was very overwhelmed by the sheer volume of volunteers," Wright said.

RCMP did not release the woman's name but did provide a photo in case anyone has spotted her.

The search hit close to home for Juan de Fuca search and rescue volunteers, many of whom know the woman, who spent more than 10 years acting as a volunteer with the search agency.

"She is in good shape and she does know the park very well," Wright said.

Her adult son and daughter were at the park Friday, eager for any news about their mother.

"They're worried and distraught and our hearts go out to them," Wright said.

Wright said it was too dangerous to continue the search on Friday night. "Plus the search crews are tired. It will be much more effective if they get some rest and start fresh in the morning."

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Carr library goes Uptown for a new life

Artful branch opens its doors Monday

AMY SMART
Times Colonist

Mounted on the wall next to a large West Coast landscape by Emily Carr, displayed prominently at her namesake library's new home, are the artist's own words: "There's nothing to compare with the push of life."

The Greater Victoria Public Library's Emily Carr branch begins its own new life on Monday, opening its doors for the first time at a new location.

On the upper level of Uptown Centre, the 5,600-square-foot library is only a stone's throw from its former home of 41 years. Despite the proximity, staff are excited at the prospect of attracting new audiences with the updated facility.

"For me, it's the modernity of the building," said Olivia Anderson, GVPL district co-ordinator for Saanich and Peninsula, when asked about the most significant change. "There's nothing like being really proud of the place where you work."

The District of Saanich is funding the move, which was projected to cost \$730,000; the actual cost is expected to be an additional \$45,000 to \$65,000, said Saanich director of finance Valla Tinney.

The reproduction of Carr's painting, titled Odds & Ends, is one of several esthetic upgrades, which also include natural light, an outdoor "reading garden" and new technology.

Emily Carr is the first Island branch to use an "automated materials handling" system — a conveyor belt for sorting returns.

Staff also have designed an economical self-checkout system, using tablets and scanners. Combined with a GVPL mobile app that allows you to download your library card's barcode to your phone, the system means physical library cards are no longer necessary.

There are 30,000 books and 10 Internet stations, plus DVDs, CDs, magazines and video games.

Despite the emphasis on technology, Anderson said there is no



ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Library assistant Amanda Butler organizes shelves at the new Emily Carr library branch.

"The role of libraries has changed," Anderson said. "What we do need is space for staff to get out and help people on the floor."

Staff can wander with tablets to advise readers, help with checkouts and assign new library cards, she said.

The GVPL board voted last April to move the branch from its former site at 3500 Blanshard St. The relocation was identified as a top priority in a 2010 facilities assessment of 10 branches.

Accessibility was the primary problem with the old facility, Anderson said, especially regarding the washrooms. They were cramped and users had to exit the building and enter another door to access them. Without staff in that part of the building, it also became a site for illicit drug use, she said.

"As much as we really loved the old Emily Carr branch, and I know it was very dear to many people, it had run its course," Anderson said.

The former branch building is to undergo about \$1 million in renovations before Saanich Police move in.

Anderson said that although the move is small, she hopes it introduces new audiences to the library. "There are probably many people who shop at Uptown who