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## Central Falls Library Relies on Volunteers in City Bankruptcy

The city of Central Falls in Rhode Island has turned to volunteers to help cope with its bankruptcy crisis. On June 27, two of the city's institutions had to be closed as instructed by state-appointed receiver Robert G. Flanders Jr. – the public library and the Ralph J. Holden Community Center. But the library has since August 1 reopened albeit in a limited way, for 3 days out of a week instead of 6 previously. This was made possible through the help of volunteers.

The city library building is the property of the Adams Library Trust. Closing down the library meant laying off the staff, which left the trust free to try to run the place itself. So Jerauld Adams, chairman of the library trust and Thomas Shannahan, a former library director came together and recruited a group of teenagers and senior citizens to run the library on a volunteer basis on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. They also changed the name of the library back to original name, the Adams Memorial Library. As of now, the trust's \$200,000 building endowment is being used to cover operating expenses and cannot be used for salaries.

A banner proclaiming, "Welcome to YOUR library" hangs atop the library entrance together with half a dozen or so requests for volunteers taped to the doors. Since reopening, the library has seen a steady stream of visitors coming back although less than the average of 150 a day in the past.

*<http://tampabankruptcy.pro/blog/>*

The library was a member of the Ocean State Libraries (OSL) network. But by eliminating the paid staff, the loss of city funding meant the library's connection to the network was also terminated. When Flanders defaulted on paying the outstanding 6 months' membership in OSL amounting to \$13,000, the organization cut the library off.

Being ostracized by the OSL brings major headaches to the volunteers. The data on card holders and the collection of books in the library were stored in the OSL computers which means not being members of the network resulted in all that lost information. Hence the volunteers have to rely on the library members and visitors themselves to provide details of their memberships.

Rejoining the OSL would require more than just money. OSL rules stipulate that a city the size of Central Falls would need a full-time library director with a masters degree, a full-time children's program director and a part-time circulation manager. But since the bankrupt city could not fund these personnel, there is no way the library could regain admission.

Hence volunteers will have to do for now.