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Comfort Cabinet lends a helping hand to those in need

May 24, 2022 – Oshkosh Public Library has always been home to stacks of books, trusted information, lively programs and crucial services. Now, it is also a pickup point for essential hygiene items not covered by government assistance programs.

The library has teamed up with the Day by Day Warming Shelter to create a Comfort Cabinet stocked with shampoo, soap, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, feminine products, hand warmers, hats and other basic necessities.

Items are housed in a repurposed card catalog located next to the First Floor Reading Room. It is maintained and stocked by staff from the Day by Day Warming Shelter.

Last November, library staff and managers toured the Day by Day Warming Shelter. Seeing how difficult it can be to reach those in need prompted library staff to work with Day by Day to help broaden the shelter's reach.

“Our visit sparked an ongoing dialogue with the shelter’s leadership about community needs and how the library can bridge some of the gaps that currently exist,” said Kim Hoffman, Public Services Operations Manager.

Providing help in a practical way that maintains both privacy and dignity were important considerations when the Comfort Cabinet was initially discussed.

“Anyone is welcome to help themselves to free items whenever the library is open,” Hoffman said. “There is no paperwork, a library card is not required, and no questions are asked.”

One of the library’s Strategic Plan Goals is to be “A community-driven library.” The Comfort Cabinet is one step toward living out that commitment.

If you would like to help, donations for the Comfort Cabinet can be dropped off at the Day by Day Warming Shelter, 449 High Avenue. Details and a current Needs List can be found at daybydayshelter.org.

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