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Morris County tweeters get social

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HANOVER — Sara Weissman runs the Morris County Library's social networking accounts on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Blogger and MySpace to reach library patrons online.

The reference librarian keeps up-to-date on the latest social media trends and teaches classes about them at the library.

After reading about a TV station that hosted a "tweetup" in Kansas, Weissman decided Morris County should have one, too — an in-person meeting of Morris residents who use Twitter, which is a free Web site where people post brief updates to share what they're doing or thinking.

"We're the community crossroads," Weissman, 61, said of the library on East Hanover Avenue in Hanover. "This is where the community conversation should happen."

Only three people were at the tweetup on Tuesday evening, perhaps because it wasn't well-publicized or maybe there isn't interest. It also could be that Weissman is slightly ahead of the curve.

"We find our grantees are just treading into the Twitter waters," said Molly de Aguiar, a program associate for the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation in Morristown who is in charge of the foundation's Web site, blog and Twitter account.

She said the foundation is encouraging organizations that receive Dodge Foundation grants to get on Twitter as a means of sharing information about their accomplishments. Homeless Solutions is one recipient that already has an account.

Arlene Stoller, health education specialist for the Morris County Office of Health Management, said she would have liked to meet other Twitter users face-to-face.

"I probably, had I known about it, would have gone if I could have," said Stoller, who launched a Twitter account with the county government's blessing about six months ago to share health updates. "I just find it all very interesting."

On Twitter, users must limit their posts to 140 characters. So, after the meeting, Weissman broadcast a necessarily brief message, called a "tweet," to the library's some 80 followers: "Good Tweetup tonight. Vigorous, wide ranging talk. Wish we'd had more people?! If we do again, will you join us?"

One of the tweetup attendees, Erica Friedman of Morristown, directed a tweet at the library: "@MCLib tweetup was fun. Small crowd, great conversation and Fig Newtons. :-)"

Friedman, Weissman and Evelyn Fischel, a Bernardsville librarian, discussed ways to optimize the Twitter experience.

Friedman, a yuri manga publisher and social media consultant for niche businesses, said she hadn't

been to a tweetup before, but sees them as valuable.

"Seeing faces and hearing voices is always superior to text-based communication," she said.

Weissman said people have busy schedules, which can make it difficult to stay on top of the newest social media. During her classes she tells students, "Don't bother trying to do it all. You don't have the time."

And sometimes, she said, "You wonder, Who are you reaching with any of this?"

She said her profession has changed since she was learning to type catalog cards in the 1970s, and that she likes learning new things. Another tweetup might be in the future.

"I'd sure like to try this again," she said.

Additional Facts

The following are tweeters in Morris County:

Daily Record, @dailyrecord, 665 followers, 2,280 tweets

Erica Friedman of Morristown, @Yuricon, 2,157 followers, 14,230 tweets

Morris County Government, @MorrisCountyNJ, 336 followers, 205 tweets

Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, @grdodge, 178 followers, 171 tweets

Madison.InJersey.com, @madisoninjersey, 113 followers, 63 tweets

Morris County Library, @mclib, 82 followers, 102 tweets

Homeless Solutions, @HCI_NJ, 47 followers, 77 tweets

Morris County Office of Health Management, @morrishealth, 46 followers, 42 tweets
