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Adams library system worst in state

Voters defeated two tax increases

By Chris Frates
Denver Post Staff Writer

The Adams County Library System is the worst large library system in the state and has been for years, according to state records and library officials.

In every vital category, from circulation to staffing, Adams County libraries rank last among their peers.

"It's pretty bad. Relative to basic standards about library service. ... Adams County is pretty much at the bottom of the heap," said Jamie LaRue, president of the Colorado Public Library Association.

The reason, those involved say, is simple — money.

In 2001, for example, the Arapahoe Library District received $64.40 in local funding for every person in the district. Adams, on the other hand, brought in $9.36, according to the Colorado State Library.

Put another way, the Arapahoe district brought in about $9.3 million more than Adams in 2001 with about 66,550 fewer people.

The Adams County Library System consists of six branches and has a 2003 budget of $3.8 million.

The system is funded by property taxes. A dedicated mill levy was established to support the library in 1988, but since then, voters have denied two attempts, most recently last year, to raise the tax.

It's unusual for citizens to vote down a library mill levy increase, said Keith Curry Lance, Colorado State Library research director.

Cheryl Dean, 20, said she's not surprised people have voted against increased tax support for the libraries.

As she perused the books in the system's Brighton branch recently, she said she rarely uses her hometown library. Instead, she visits one in Fort Lupton where the service and selection are better.

"If (patrons) wanted something right away, I would suggest they go to Fort Lupton," she said, "because here, they usually don't have what you're looking for."

Without money to begin remedying the system's problems, library officials feel hopeless, LaRue said.

"They get trapped in the mentality of the poor," he said.

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...church has always played an important role within the African-American community. ... when we couldn't get into hotels ... they discriminated against us.'

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IF UNFUNDED

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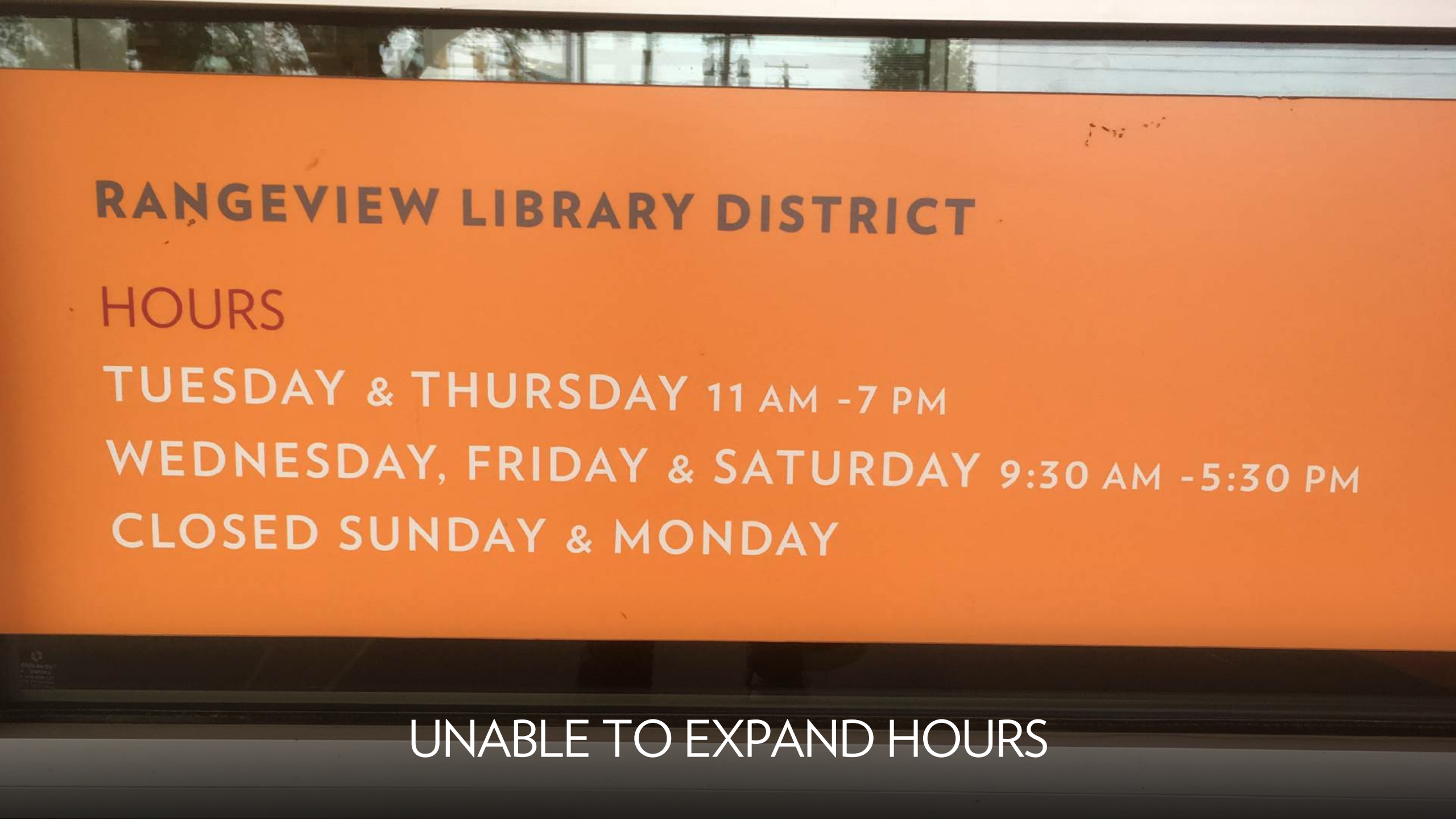
NOT ENOUGH COMPUTERS TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND

UNABLE TO BUILD NEW FACILITIES TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND

UNABLE TO EXPAND COLLECTIONS



UNABLE TO EXPAND HOURS

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