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Lake County Library System

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Florida Library History Project

Lake County Library System

In 1975, the Lake County Library Planning Advisory Board was created to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for a county wide library system.

Mr. Cecil Beach, consultant, was retained to perform a feasibility study and make recommendations based on the information.

Beach advised the Advisory Board to adopt the Interlocal Agreement format for the County's library organization. The Advisory Board concurred with his recommendation and reported that to the Board of County Commissioner's.

On September 29, 1982, the Lake County Board of County Commissioners authorized the signature of the county ordinance that established the County-wide library system. Charter members of the Lake County Library System were Cooper Memorial Library in Clermont, Eustis Memorial Library and Umatilla Public Library. Ms. Mary McMahan was named as the Interim Library Coordinator.

By 1990, the Lake County Library System had grown to six member libraries. However, during that year four of the system's libraries, Mount Dora Public Library, Eustis Memorial Library, Umatilla Public Library and Fruitland Park Library withdrew from the system.

In 1992 Umatilla Public Library and Mount Dora Public Library rejoined the Lake County Library System.

The newly formed Lady Lake Public Library joined the system in 1993.

Fruitland Park Library rejoined the Lake County Library System in 1997, bringing the current number of member libraries to six.

Ms. Wendy R. Breeden serves the Lake County Library System as Library Services Manager. She has a full time county staff of 10 people.

HISTORIES OF MEMBER LIBRARIES

Cooper Memorial Library (Clermont)

In 1914 Alice Cooper donated land so that a library building could be built at 630 DeSoto Street. Members of the Clermont Woman's Club served as Librarians. Additions to the structure were built in 1954 and 1974.

By 1980 though, the building was too small and the library moved to its present building which was previously a bank. The building was renovated with donations. In 1984 a new children's room was added. And, in 1995 another addition was completed with the help of State Construction Grant monies and donations.

In 1952, the Cooper Memorial Library Association was formed to administer the operations of the library. It currently continues to function in that capacity.

In 1982 the library became a charter member of the Lake County Library System. Today, the Library Director is Ms. Bonnie Ray.

Fruitland Park Library

Originally housed in a small house, the Fruitland Park Library has been in continuous operation since 1917.

In 1936, the library acquired the status of "Community Library". It was then supported jointly by the women of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Community United Methodist Church and St. Paul's Catholic Church.

The library was incorporated in 1966.

Ms. Beverly Matier was the first salaried librarian, serving from 1970.

Today the librarian is Ms. Cathy Mahoney.

Lady Lake Public Library

In 1987 the Kiwanis Club of Lady Lake bought an old train depot and moved it to its present site. Due to the hard work of the Kiwanis members and other volunteers, the building was renovated, and two railroad cars were purchased and moved to the site.

The City of Lady Lake completed the project in 1991 and committed additional funds to hire a librarian and furnish the buildings.

The first librarian, Marion Holmes was hired in 1991.

Today, the library director is Ms. Marilyn Nesbitt.

Tavares Public Library

The Tavares Public Library was originally started by the Tavares Women's Club. The Tavares Recreation Association re-activated the library in 1951.

In 1973 a new facility was built at its present site. A Children's Library was opened in 1984 in a small, renovated building in the corner of the property. However, the children's services were moved back into the original building in 1992.

A large addition and renovation of the original building is expected to be completed by the Fall of 1998.

The first librarian was a volunteer, Ms. Kay Weidman.

Currently, the library director is Ms. JoAnne McIntosh.

Umatilla Public Library

In 1917 the women of Umatilla came together to create a library for the people of Umatilla. An upstairs room in the Armitage Building and books were donated.

During the WPA Days, a log cabin was built and the library moved into it until the

building burned in 1959. The library was housed in a variety of buildings over the next 20 years.

In 1980 the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company donated a depot for the library. Mrs. E.L. Atkinson donated land for the building. By 1983 the project was complete.

In 1986 a caboose was received and dedicated in 1988.

Ms. Emily Quinley was the first librarian. As library director since 1972, Ms. Mary Ellen Babb serves as its current director.

W. T. Bland Public Library (Mount Dora)

In 1905 a collection of nonfiction books were donated to the town for the purpose of starting a library. The books were housed in Town Hall. Ladies from the Women's Club volunteered to staff the library.

In 1917 the library was moved to the basement of Education Hall, a private school. Since then the library has moved a few times. It now is housed in a new building which was completed in 1995.

A committee served as its first "librarian". Those on the committee were Ms. Easter Armstrong, Ms. Ora G. Hoagland, Ms. Margaret Lewis and Mr. Will Gardner. Currently, Ms. Stephanie Haimes serves as library director.

--Dr. Diane D. Kamp, Program Coordinator, Lake County Library System

--March 1998