Growing Up: Business Booming at Tower Road, Library Partnership Branches

In 2018, excited crowds poured through the doors at the new Library Partnership Branch and the renovated Tower Road Branch. They haven't stopped coming.

Visits to Library Partnership Branch hit an all-time high of 141,039 in fiscal year 2018-2019, a 53 percent increase from fiscal year 2017-2018. Tower Road Branch clocked 207,373 visits, up 19 percent from the prior year. Both branches continue to bring in patrons with their unique collections and services.

At Library Partnership Branch, the StudioSpace is often booked by local musicians and students eager to record their beats and videos. Gainesville Black Professionals recorded several episodes of the organization's podcast in the studio. Across the building, the meeting room turns into a safe spot for children and teens to congregate after school as the ChillSpace.

Tower Road Branch continues popular offerings like the Conversational English program and piloted new programs last year, including a well-attended Pride Picnic in October. The branch’s FoodieSpace has hosted cooking competitions, healthy eating classes, and cake decorating workshops.

While the foot traffic keeps the team members at both branches busy, they are ready to welcome more new faces in 2020.

story from Rachel Cook, ACLD
photo courtesy ACLD
Letter from the Director

Each December, the Alachua County Library District’s Leadership Team meets to plan for the upcoming fiscal year and review our Long Range Plan. In the coming months, I look forward to sharing the exciting projects we’re working on with your support. Until then, I’m excited to share a few highlights from our busy fall and winter.

In September, we welcomed about 1,600 new cardholders during National Library Card Sign-Up month. We began our campaign by hosting Albert and Alberta at Headquarters Branch for a special Gator Storytime and continued with special outreach events throughout September. We held a raffle for new cardholders, with prizes from great local businesses - Cloud 9 Spa, the Cade Museum, Dragonfly Sushi, Satchel’s Pizza, and Boca Fiesta. We appreciate the support of these partners and the hard work of our entire team to make September’s efforts successful.

We closed out the year with captivating presenters on genealogy, jazz, and race. Drew Smith, one half of the Genealogy Guys podcast team, visited Headquarters Branch on December 14th to share ancestry research advice. Jazz aficionado and flutist Galen Abdur-Razzaq performed at Waldo, Cone Park, Hawthorne, and Alachua branches in December. Thank you to FOL for sponsoring both programs.

On November 21st, we launched the 2020 Author Series with National Book Award-winning author Ibram X. Kendi. The Author Series resumes on January 12th with University of Florida Professor Jill Ciment discussing her latest novel, The Body in Question. The series continues with romance novelist Rochelle Alers on January 25th (co-sponsored by the Opinionated Ladies Book Club), best-selling thriller author Chris Bohjalian on March 21st, and beach reads queen Mary Alice Monroe on May 23rd. All programs are held at 2:30 pm at Headquarters Branch Meeting Room A. Learn more about the series and reserve copies of these authors’ works at www.aclib.us/authorseries.

In February, we are excited to bring Rick Smith, son of acclaimed author Patrick Smith, to Alachua County for a personal look at his father’s best-loved work and the life experiences that informed his writing. He will present “Patrick Smith’s Florida is A Land Remembered” on Wednesday, February 26th, at 1 PM at Millhopper Branch and 5 PM at Hawthorne Branch, and on Thursday, February 27th, at 5 PM at Newberry Branch. Thank you to FOL for supporting Smith’s visit.

We celebrated National Friends of Libraries Week October 20-26. I would like to thank each of you through the newsletter as well. Every year, FOL’s financial support empowers the Library District to offer more programs and tell our story to more people. While we will always appreciate your financial contributions, we are also thankful for each of your acts of generosity shown in other ways. For the hours you spend sorting donations in Florida’s winter chill or sweltering summer. For the endless tables of cookbooks, records, board games, and DVDs which you meticulously organize for each sale. For the hundreds of books that you distribute to local children annually. For the ways you advocate for us by telling your friends and neighbors about the Library District. For your patronage at all our branches. Thank you for being the best Friends that we, and Alachua County, could have.

Social Media Volunteers Needed

Local volunteers are needed to help maintain FOL’s social media presence. Are you interested in helping promote Friends of the Library on line? If so, please contact FOL at FOLACLD@bellsouth.net.
Washington Irving is the Celebrity Author for the ACLD Foundation’s Eighth Annual Non-Event Gala

Since 2012, the Foundation has hosted an annual Non-Event Gala to raise funds for its work on behalf of the Alachua County Library District and its patrons. This year’s Gala honors Washington Irving on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the publication of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (including his famed stories “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle”).

An actual event would be at the Van Tassel mansion, with a menu containing “the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea table in the sumptuous time of autumn,” including the “doughty doughnut, the tender olykoek ... sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes.” Mr. Van Winkle would lead the ninepins play and provide a keg “with the flavor of excellent Hollands,” which one quaffs at one’s own risk, as Mr. Van Winkle would attest from his own experiences.

Alas! Mr. Irving and his literary creations could not be with us, so instead the ACLD Foundation encourages you to stay home with a good book, safe from the specter bridegrooms and headless horsemen and Tom Walker’s Devil and little men playing ninepins. As the author himself states, “I would draw forth one of my cherished story-books, stretch myself on the green sward, and soon lose myself in its bewitching contents.”

As you relax at home, please consider how your donation of $100 or more to the Alachua County Library District Foundation Non-Event Gala supports your public library. Checks should indicate that they are for the Gala, be payable to the ACLD Foundation, and mailed to the ACLD Foundation, 401 E. University Ave, Gainesville, FL 32601. All proceeds go directly to the ACLD Foundation. This gift is tax deductible and 100% of your donation goes towards building our library endowment, which in turn enables the Foundation to provide substantial annual funding to our library district.

Thank you for keeping Washington Irving’s storytelling and that of other great authors alive for future generations.

*The ACLD Foundation is a support group for the Alachua County Library District.*
Follow the Quilt Trail to a Library Near You

The 2020 Quilt Trail will stitch a path through eleven Library District Branch this spring.

The Alachua County Library District and the Quilters of Alachua County Day Guild are collaborating to celebrate quilting as an art form with displays of works at participating locations in March. Quilt Trail displays will be up at Alachua, Cone Park, Hawthorne, Headquarters, High Springs, Library Partnership, Micanopy, Millhopper, Newberry, Tower Road, and Waldo branches.

Participants can track their progress along the trail on special bookmarks that can be returned to any branch by March 31st to be entered into a raffle for a redwork quilt donated by the Quilters of Alachua County Day Guild.

Sarah Grainger, library specialist for the MakerSpace program, is curating the exhibit with hopes that the displays inspire people to try quilting. Just like other arts, quilting offers styles for every sensibility, she shared.

“The Quilt Trail is a way to share the love of quilts across all generations,” Grainger said.

Message from the President

[ed. note: For those of you who aren’t volunteering in the Bookhouse, here’s an insider’s view.]

Items donated to FOL are grouped by sorters who allocate donations by category. With an influx of new volunteers and ongoing procedural updates, FOL is planning a refresher course for sorters and table coordinators early next year. In anticipation, I offer a primer – a common set of rules – from the sorting I’ve learned over the past eleven years.

Rules number 1 to 4 are paramount.

1) Answer the phone.
2) Help each driver unload donations.
3) Ask questions when you’re puzzled.
4) Read the table coordinators’ instructions on the sorters’ table.
5) Consequently, don’t cover those instructions with books.
6) Open every book; if damaged, ask your shift leader what to do.

7) Some books fit several categories, so spread them around.
8) Use the divided carts only for the paperbacks that are bagged at the front of FOL. Put all other paperbacks on the “normal” carts.
9) Get to know some of the table coordinators and their wishes. If what they want is not clearly written on their instructions, ask them to do so. And finally,
10) If you want to manage a table, tell your shift leader.

Happy Sorting and Happy New Year.
Getting to Know You

Spotlight on Library Staff
Jishnu Dasa Fitch

Position: Senior Library Specialist
Waldo Branch Library

Background: Jishnu Dasa Fitch has worked for the Alachua County Library District since October 2014 when he was hired as a page in the Circulation Department. In 2015, he became a library assistant at the Library Partnership Branch and in 2016 he became a library specialist in the Outreach Services Department, delivering library services throughout Alachua County from behind the wheel of the bookmobiles. In June 2019, Jishnu Dasa assumed his current position as senior library specialist at the Waldo Branch.

Before moving to Florida, Jishnu Dasa lived in Hillsborough, North Carolina, and worked for the Orange County Public Library system there. Prior to that, he lived in Boston, where he was born and raised. Go Celtics! Go Patriots! Go Red Sox! He has also lived in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and New York City.

Today, Jishnu Dasa resides in La Crosse, where he is an elected member of the La Crosse Town Council. He shares his life there with his wife and four children – all boys – ages 9, 7, 5, and 3. They enjoy jumping on their trampoline; playing soccer, tennis, hide-and-seek, and basketball together; and, of course, family reading time. The Big Nate and Diary of a Wimpy Kid series are favorites in their household right now. They are all active members of the Hare Krishna community in Alachua and La Crosse.

Jishnu Dasa is an avid reader. He loves Hindu devotional books, such as Bhagavad Gita and Shrimad Bhagavatam. He also likes to read old science fiction by authors like Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein. Most recently he has been working his way through the books of Leigh Bardugo’s Grishaverse.

At the Waldo Branch, Jishnu Dasa facilitates programs such as Story Time and Music and Movement for children, Teen Book Club, and ArtSpace for all ages.

Spotlight on FOL Volunteer
Chris Curry

Position: Table Coordinator for Hobbies

Background: Chris Curry wears many hats at the FOL Bookhouse – from table coordinator to carpenter. Teacher, artist, builder, craftsman, horticulturist, reader – Chris is a lifelong learner with a degree in Sociology who is happy teaching in the classroom, producing cartoon art, camping in the Smoky Mountains, or designing landscape plans for horse farms.

Chicago-born and growing up in a heavily populated suburb, Chris knew when he graduated that he did not want to live in an urban area. Moving to Florida, he taught in a free school. He also worked at a local nursery. The skills he developed there led to a business in landscape design for horse farms.

Chris later taught middle school reading classes for fourteen years. To get books into students’ homes and get his students to read, he accumulated thousands of books for his classroom library – many of them bought at the FOL book sales.

Chris draws on all these experiences when volunteering at the Bookhouse. Whether using a hammer or artist’s pens, Chris Curry is making his mark at FOL.
Our New Volunteers

In August and November, Friends of the Library welcomed a record 29 new volunteers.

Volunteer Coordinator Doris Harvey introduced these new FOL members to the Bookhouse and discussed sorting guidelines and FOL procedures. Everyone worked diligently to have the Bookhouse ready for the Fall Book Sale and afterwards to restock the shelves for the Spring Sale in April, 2020. FOL is delighted to have these eager, talented, and friendly new volunteers.

Brian Adams is looking forward to working with us. Valerie Austin is a returning volunteer, historian, and musician. Christina Black is a former library media specialist and avid reader. Nathan Breman enjoys reading for long periods of time. Robert Covell just completed his AA degree at Santa Fe College. Kyndal Herring loves animals and food. Phyllis Hilenski is a three-time cancer survivor and bone marrow transplant recipient who is also a poet and artist. Jeannette Hinsdale is a lover of Alachua County. Valerie Jones retired from horticultural sciences at UF. Betsy Livingston is happy to be back at Friends of the Library. Karen Summerhays is excited by finding new opportunities in Alachua County.

Diane Bellomy recently moved to Gainesville and was impressed by the work of FOL. Barbara Rosenfeld is a retired art dealer from Philadelphia and moved to Gainesville because of her four granddaughters and their parents. Richard Rosenfeld collects Wade figurines. Susan Snow is a retired media specialist and moved to Gainesville to be closer to her children.

Homer Bryant is a retired engineer. Jim Cato is Professor Emeritus of Economics and directed the Florida Sea Grant and School of Natural Resources and Environment. Amir Etemadi is excited to work at FOL and loves basketball. Tabor Grindrod is a long time band nerd and science lover. Lori Ross is eager to stay busy and says that she is retired but still alive! Cameron Suiters is a gardener, avid reader, and plant science major. Cara Trench loves coffee, reading and the outdoors.

Joseph Dickens has been a middle school and math teacher for the past eight years at Howard Bishop Middle School. Kim Hankins retired after 26 years as a SFC Library Specialist. Stephanie Karolus is an avid Packers fan. Carol Jean Portner is a retired social worker and loves to travel. Kedrin Purcell was born and raised in Alaska where the long nights were good for reading. Traci Reust loves mountain hiking, exercise, and being married to Daryl. Kenny Winston says he is a good worker.
2019 Fall Sale

Despite a rainy first day, the continued support from local and regional buyers guaranteed the success of the 2019 Fall Book Sale of Friends of the Library (FOL). Shoppers braved the weather to shop for first-day bargains, then returned during the sale as tables were restocked each day. During Half-Price Day on Tuesday and for Wednesday’s Dime Day, book lovers and bargain hunters found numerous items to pack into boxes, tote bags, backpacks, roller bags, strollers, and car trunks. Friends of the Library thanks everyone for supporting this sale and, through it, the Alachua County Library District and community projects that FOL funds.

Now it’s time to start again! With continued contributions from the community, we anticipate that the 2020 spring sale will be just as well-stocked and successful. Please bring in donations of books, movies, records, video games, music, and artwork and encourage your friends and family members to do the same. Mark your calendar – the Spring Book Sale will be April 25-29, 2020.
Remember - the benefits of your membership include:
• 4 newsletters per year,
• invitations to the annual meeting and special seminars,
• volunteer opportunities with the twice-yearly book sales.
• But the biggest benefit of all is that wonderful feeling you get from doing something great for your family, neighbors, and community.

Invite your friends to join FRIENDS!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New ☐ Renewal ☐ - FOL member since _______

Name: _______________________________________
     (as you wish your membership name to appear)

Address: _____________________________________

City : ________________ State: ___ Zip: ___________

Telephone: Home ____________ Work _____________

E-Mail Address ________________________________

Membership Categories

☐ $150 Life Member (65+)
☐ $15 Individual
☐ $50 Patron
☐ $10 Student/Senior (65+)
☐ $25 Family
☐ $ ___ Other

Volunteer Opportunities

☐ Book Sales
☐ Book Sorting (year round)
☐ Other talents, please call me
☐ I can’t volunteer, but am happy to support FOL with my membership

Make checks payable to FOL

Mail to: Friends of the Library, Attn: Membership
         430-B N Main Street, Gainesville, FL 32601