



GEORGIA PUBLIC  
LIBRARY SERVICE

# LIBRARY NEWS

A newsletter for friends and employees of Georgia's public libraries

Volume 15, issue 5, April 2018

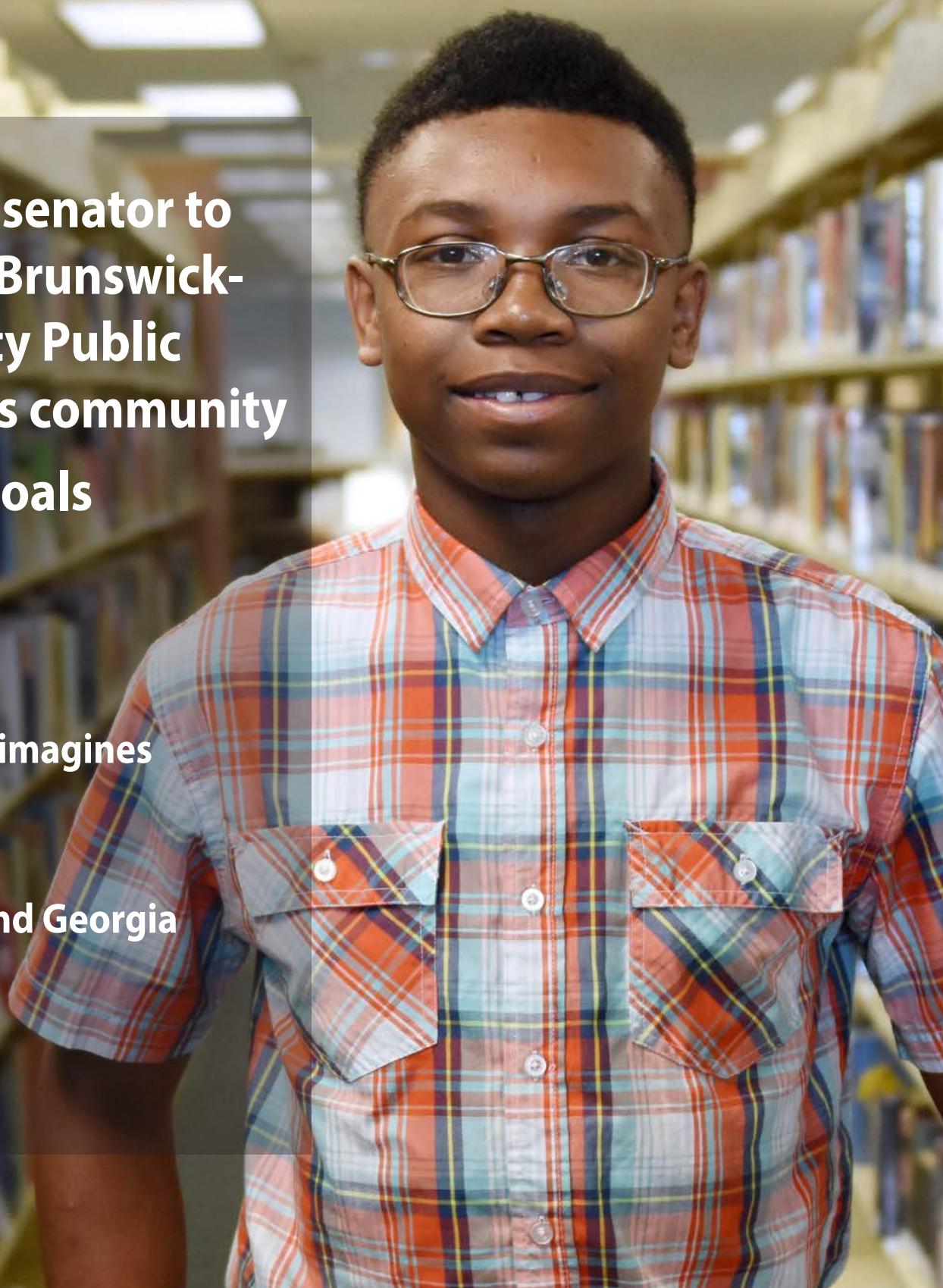
**From future senator to  
U.S. citizen, Brunswick-  
Glynn County Public  
Library helps community  
achieve its goals**

**Also...**

**Harris County reimagines  
its library**

**News from around Georgia**

**and more!**



# Public libraries are the heart of our communities

By State Librarian Julie Walker

Across Georgia, we have vibrant, world-class cities and charming small towns. From the mountains to the coast, in communities large and small, urban and rural, one thing is certain: There's a public library at the heart of every one. With 407 libraries in every corner of our state, Georgia exemplifies this year's National Library Week theme: Libraries Lead. It's been my honor to speak with an amazing array of library supporters in recent weeks: trustees, Friends and local and state elected officials who have many essential services to fund, and yet their commitment to our libraries confirms their belief in the services and programs we provide.

Georgia's public libraries lead the way in supporting and enhancing educational opportunities at every level. From pre-K to graduate school and beyond, libraries play essential roles in creating a more educated Georgia. Our libraries are at the forefront of learning, offering 3-D printing, robotics workshops and a wealth of e-book titles in addition to

traditional print books. There is something for everyone: book clubs, storytimes, kid's yoga, career fairs, concerts, chess tournaments, passports, young adult sleepovers and more.

If these surprise you, I invite you to visit your public library today. Each one is unique, because each community is unique. This issue of Library News focuses on how Georgia's libraries are meeting the needs of their communities through inclusive planning and listening closely and responding to the needs of our patrons and those who may not yet be our users. We recognize that one size does not fit all, and we're proud that our libraries reflect the diversity, inclusion and distinctiveness that exemplify Georgia. Libraries meet the needs of communities, creating vibrant, essential hubs for education, economic development and information and also engendering thought, research, conversation and fun. Georgia Public Library Service strives to showcase these special places. ■

## Patrons welcome World Languages collection



*"When I speak to my children in my native language, I am showing them my emotion," said Priya Narasimhan, patron at Sharon Forks Library who is fluent in Tamil and Hindi.*

The Sharon Forks Library reopened March 24 after a yearlong expansion and renovation that nearly doubled its size. The highest-circulating branch in Georgia, its renovation gives room for the entire community to use the library in individual ways.

One unique feature is a new World Languages collection featuring books written in Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

"We want everyone to feel welcome and to find materials they will use. What we have created is based on community surveys and research to help us understand the local need," said Anna Lyle, director of the Forsyth County Public Library System.

Shyam Kasthuri and his wife, Priya Narasimhan, welcome the opportunities the collection will bring for parents to share their culture with children, as well as with her parents, to bring family traditions closer to their new home.

"We don't have access to very many print books in Tamil. Now this library has a whole collection that we can use to share our culture and history with our children," said Shyam.

The collection houses about 500 books in each language and adds to the growing collection of Spanish books housed in the World Languages collections at the Cumming and Post Road libraries.

Patrons are encouraged to share feedback with library staff so that desired materials can be selected as the collection expands. ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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The Athens-Clarke County Library hosted "Bling Your Prom" in March. Community members donated gently-used formal attire and accessories. Teens learned from volunteers who provided hair and makeup tutorials and alterations. Teens left with 123 prom outfits. "Everyone deserves to make special memories at prom, but it can be out of reach. We wanted to ease the financial strain for teens and their parents," said Library Teen Services Supervisor **Devera Chandler**.

**Chelsea Kovalevskiy** was promoted to assistant director of the **Cherokee Regional Library**.

The **Conyers-Rockdale Library System** has been awarded a Common Heritage grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support the documentation initiative, "African American Heritage and Faith."

The **Nancy Guinn Memorial Library** hosted Black History Month activities and partnered with the Rockdale County Chapter of the NAACP for the first time. The celebration included materials about NAACP Image Award Winners; a Local Voices program where speakers detailed life in the segregated South; and youth programs such as a teen open mic and activities to make African jewelry and instruments. Also at the **Nancy Guinn Memorial Library**, **Carolyn Cathey**, youth services specialist and head of the children's department, retired after working for the Conyers-Rockdale Library System for 12 years. **Ashley Pearson** was promoted to youth services specialist.

The **Dalton-Whitfield County Public Library** Math Tutoring Program helps fill educational gaps by preparing algebra students for the end-of-course exam and is taught by local high school math teachers. In 2017, participants saw an average jump of 10+ points from pre- to post-test. For many, this is the difference between

passing and failing. Tutoring is funded by Dalton, Whitfield County, the state of Georgia, a sponsorship from Georgia United Credit Union and a grant from the North Georgia Electric Membership Corporation.

**GLASS Director Pat Herndon** has won the 2018 Francis Joseph Campbell Award, for making an outstanding contribution to the advancement of library service for the blind and physically handicapped. **Barnaby Camp** has been hired as a readers advisor at **GLASS Atlanta**. **Teneka Williams** has assumed responsibility for the library services provided by the State Professional Library, in addition to managing the **GLASS Distribution Center**.

**Gwinnett County Public Library System** has been named the winner of the KLAS/National Organization on Disability Award, which recognizes an innovative project that developed or expanded services for people with disabilities. For the second straight year, The Atlanta-Journal Constitution has recognized **Gwinnett County Public Library** as one of the Top 150 Workplaces in the Atlanta area. Gwinnett County Public Library has hired **Ann Serrie** as volunteer coordinator.

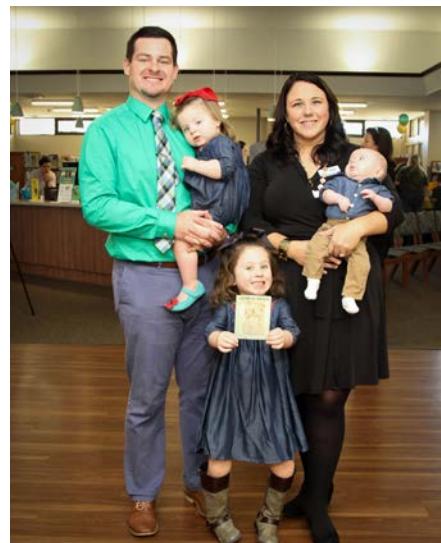
In the **Middle Georgia Regional Library System**, **Leda Starnes**, Crawford County Library manager, was recognized by the Board of Commissioners for 25 years of service. **Charles A. Lanford Library** Branch Manager **Susan Lemme** has retired. **Samantha Wilcox** has been promoted to branch manager at **Shurling Library Branch**. The **Jones County Library** held a groundbreaking ceremony, and the **Washington Memorial Library** held a grand opening for their New Business and Non-profit Center (BANC) thanks to the Knight Foundation.

**Moultrie-Colquitt County Library** received a Capital Outlay grant to help

fund a renovation of their main library. A temporary location is accessible and convenient to downtown. The library had to downsize operations but is still able to accommodate the needs of most patrons, and the bookmobile continues to cover its usual routes.

The new **North Georgia Library Director's Group** furthers conversations beyond statewide library director meetings. "We wanted a more intimate setting for discussing the nitty-gritty and building a stronger relationship with neighboring directors, who can be a wealth of knowledge," said Mountain Regional Director **Vince Stone**.

The new **Sewell Mill Library & Cultural Center** in Marietta is a joint use facility of the Cobb County Public Library System and Cobb County Parks Department. Library officials are reaching out to schools, arts organizations and more as part of a strategy to offer creative space for engaging the community.



Nelson Sanders

The Winder Public Library has reopened after extensive renovations increased areas for books, computers and patrons. At the reopening celebration, local donors were recognized and State Librarian Julie Walker presented the Georgia Library Champion of the Year Award to Rep. Terry England for his support of public libraries. Pictured here enjoying the celebration are Piedmont Regional Library System Assistant Director for Children's Services **Kelli McDaniel** and family.

# Inclusive planning enables Harris County Public Library to meet community needs

## *Local and state funding provides critical support for projects*

It was two weeks before the Harris County Public Library opened its new facility to the public, but you wouldn't know so from the full parking lot and people walking through the front door on a recent Wednesday morning. As library staff shelved books and set up computers amid boxes, cleaning supplies and ladders, a patron came in to ask if he could check out the latest Dean Koontz book.

"People in this community love their library," said Branch Manager Stephanie Green, as she handed the man a flier about the upcoming opening and promised that a librarian would find the requested book.

Adjacent to a community center, the new facility is a focal destination point in Hamilton, a rural town with around 1,100 residents located just north of Columbus, GA.

Features include a teen area - the high school is just down the road, makerspace with both traditional crafts and technology, quiet study room, self-service business center, children's area that encourages exploration, dedicated Friends of the Library storefront and a

space with a fireplace for patrons to lounge.

"This library and this land will feed the growth of quality public services in our county for many years to come," said Bob Patterson, trustee on the Harris County Library Board.

Harris County Public Library outgrew its former space, where staff were forced to be creative about how to shelve books and were unable to provide a quality programs. They even had to regularly turn away children from summer reading events.

Now, at 15,000 square feet with multiple spaces for events and programming, the library can better serve its patrons.

"A good library reflects its community's needs. We listen a lot to our patrons and implement their programming ideas whenever possible," said Stephanie Green. "Many things we do here may not work elsewhere, because they wouldn't meet the character or the need."

**"A good library reflects its community's needs. We listen a lot to our patrons and implement their ideas whenever possible. "**

- Stephanie Green,  
Branch Manager



### **How was the new facility funded?**

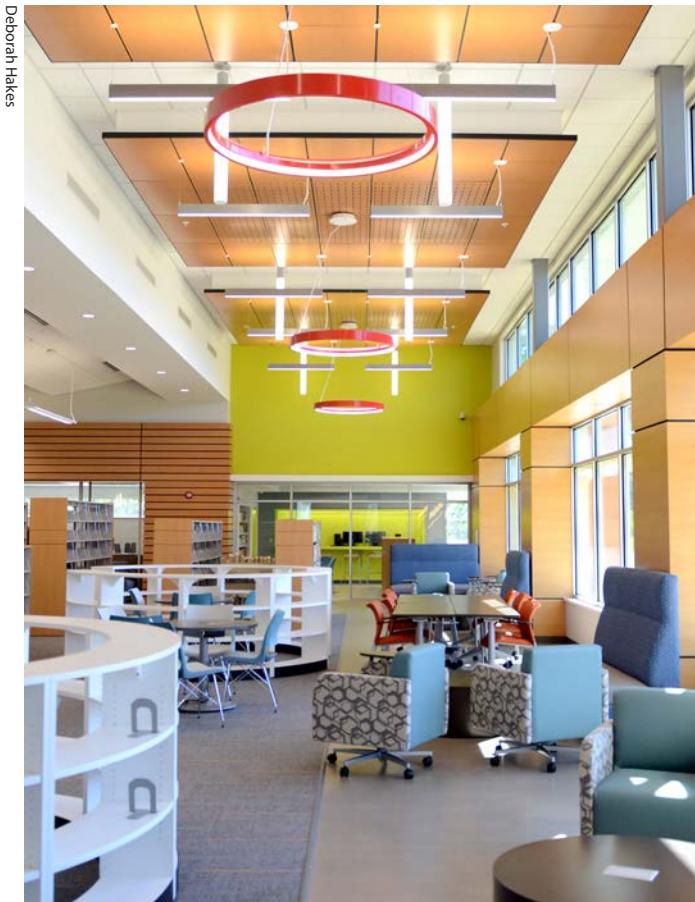
Funds for the \$5.226 million construction project included \$2 million from a Capital Outlay grant through Georgia Public Library Service, \$2 million from the special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) and \$1.226 million in donations, including a \$500,000 donation by the Callaway Foundation.

"The support and guidance we received from our local county commissioners, led by Board Chair Harry Lange, were key," said Troup-Harris Library Director Keith Schuermann. "Just as critical was the support of our state legislative delegation, in particular Sen. Joshua McKoon, who believes in the importance of quality library services for the Harris County community."

Deborah Hakes

## How does Georgia Public Library Service assist libraries with construction and renovation?

Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) Library Planning and Construction Director Nathan Rall serves as an adviser on location, design and more, as well as a



In many rural areas including Harris County, the library is the only place where residents can access the internet. The new library has a computer training lab, stand-alone PC stations and robust wireless connectivity for those bringing their own devices.

liaison between libraries and state funding agencies. GPLS funds projects through two types of state grants: Capital Outlay, which is primarily for new construction and full renovations, and Major Repair and Renovation, which completes deferred maintenance such as roof repair.

"It is critical for libraries to be able to meet the needs of their community, and they can't do so if they must turn patrons away for lack of space or if they aren't compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act," said Nathan Rall. "We aim to create spaces that are flexible to meet future needs as well. Libraries have the potential to be the center of every community, and we can empower them to do it." ■

## Accessibility conference highlights need to better serve all in community

Roy Cummings



"Libraries serve a critical role as a civic institution. Information and programs that libraries offer are so important for all citizens, and for people with disabilities in the community, it's as important if not moreso because they offer information and resources that are not readily available in other locations," said Georgia ADA Coordinator Mike Galifianakis.

More than 80 people attended the 2018 Georgia Accessibility Conference in March to understand ways their libraries can better meet the needs of all patrons. "This conference gives public libraries a great opportunity to consider how their libraries are designed and how their programs are offered in regard to serving persons with physical disabilities. Libraries must think of ways that services can be accessible to all," said Pat Herndon, director of Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS). ■

# An engaged community achieves its goals at Brunswick-Glynn County Public Library

*Strategic planning was key to understand community needs*

Huy Nguyen is a regular at the Brunswick-Glynn County Public Library, where he studies or relaxes after class or his full-time job. He wants to own a business, but his biggest goal is to become a U.S. citizen. Helping him along the way is George Giannoumous, a retired immigration officer who meets with his immigrant clients at the library because it's a safe, public yet private space that everyone knows and trusts.

"We give a place for people to set and achieve their goals," said Marshes of Glynn Libraries Director Geri Mullis, which also includes the St. Simons Island Public Library. "From someone trying to obtain their U.S. citizenship to a kid who wants to be a senator."

That kid is 16-year-old Thomas Hunter, whose positivity and work ethic shine through immediately. He impacts the lives of patrons through his volunteerism since age 12, teaching conversational Spanish and English classes, tutoring and assisting at book sales. "I'm the go-to guy for the credit card machine," he said, "and I also carry boxes, because customers seem to buy a huge amount of books and then park as far away as possible!"

Thomas loves that the library has activities for anyone, even those without a library card. "The library is engaged and open to everyone in the community," he said. "It draws people in for more."

**“We can help hardworking people overcome challenges to achieve their American Dream.”**

**George Giannoumous, volunteer**



*"My family has always gone to the library," said 16-year-old Thomas Hunter, who has volunteered at the library for four years.*

The library is a hub of activity with patrons using the space in diverse ways, which the library seeks to cultivate through its strategic plan.

"We conducted surveys and met with the community and found out that what they wanted was more," said Mullis. "More books, programs, open hours, meeting space - more, more, more. We were open to what people had to say even when it was hard to hear. That's how we can meet people's needs."

While the community here has always valued its library, there was a need to focus outward. "People's needs have changed, they are no longer coming to the library simply for information," said Mullis. "Our strategic plan was a great chance to use data and show a new way forward. We are always listening and asking questions. For example, we found that to engage parents, you must make it easy by hitting exactly what they want and when. If you can get them here for storytime or crafts and equate happy memories for their child, they are hooked. You have a lifelong patron; now offer yoga or a cooking class."

As a result of their efforts, attendance numbers have increased by 103 percent between FY2015-2017, as the number of programs offered also increased by 67 percent. The library utilizes volunteers and partners

to meet demand and contracts with local professionals to conduct storytimes, computer classes and more.

The strategic planning process and statistics gathered enabled them to make a strong case for and obtain local and state funding needed to improve existing facilities to better serve the community.

They created a Facility Master Plan to show how to maximize the library space and add meeting rooms. Renovations will begin in August 2018, although some spaces, like the children's room, already have been completed. With the reimagined space for children, they accommodated over 500 people at one summer reading program in 2017!

"Everything we do revolves around how to build a love of literature," said Mullis. "We entice you to come in for fun, educational activities and then share a book to match."

The result of all their efforts will be an improved space to help engaged community members achieve their goals, whatever they may be, for years to come.

"In my role, and through the library, we can help hardworking people overcome challenges to achieve their American Dream," said George Giannoumous. ■

*There are many good ways to create a strategic plan, and Georgia Public Library Service can help. Contact Assistant State Librarian Wendy Cornelisen at (404) 235-7122 for more information.*

## Want more library news and stories of impact?

Follow Georgia Public Library Service on Facebook and Twitter and join our email list at [georgialibraries.org](http://georgialibraries.org).

Deborah Hakes





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Information presented in this newsletter will be provided in alternative formats on request. For more information about Georgia's libraries and literary events, or to post an event, visit [www.georgialibraries.org](http://www.georgialibraries.org)

Roy Cummings



*Read books and get free tickets to see the Atlanta Hawks, Braves or Gladiators, or the Macon Mayhem!*

*Sign up for your local public library's Summer Reading Program to participate. Georgia Public Library Service partners with organizations across Georgia to provide cultural and entertainment experiences, saving families more than \$13 million over the last 10 years. Find out more at [georgialibraries.org](http://georgialibraries.org).*