



Friends of the Long Beach Public Library Newsletter

Winter 2025

**Community Welcomes Return of Bay Shore Neighborhood Library**

The renovated Bay Shore Neighborhood Library threw a party in celebration of its reopening on 11 January. The enthusiasm was infectious as patrons poured into the beloved space. Each and every person we greeted smiled and shared their enthusiasm: “We have waited so long for this!” “We are so happy you are back!” “Thank you so much for doing this for us!”



Mayor Rex Richardson, Library Director Cathy DeLeon and library staff, and other city officials welcomed the crowd and led a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Children of all ages enjoyed a visit from some of the characters from author Mo Willems’ books. Children and parents visited the photo booth equipped with ocean-themed props, played games, and participated in crafting activities. Of course, refreshments were served.



The library closed for renovation in fall 2023, including replacement of windows, new carpeting, some new furniture, and an additional ADA ramp at the Bay Shore Avenue entrance, among other amenities.



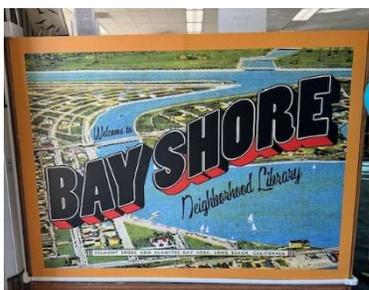


Christopher T. Magician entertained everyone who could fit into the community room with his magic, humor, and pet rat. Both charming and hilarious, CTM and his young volunteers had the audience of children, parents, grandparents, and friends laughing, often to tears. The room was alive with community spirit. It was a joy to watch and listen to our patrons enjoying this important library once again.



Renovations of the library were paid for by Measure A funds. Funds from Friends of the Library supported the celebration by paying for Christopher T. Magician, new patio furniture, balloons, and much more.

Thank you to Friends of the LB PL board members (Patti Benoit, Lisa Moore, Samantha Aviles, Dawn Mendelson, Arlene Gale, Jan Jackson, Liliana Roman, Diane Riska-Taylor) for serving as greeters at the doors, assisting where needed, and sharing our mission with everyone who attended. We also thank the library staff for inviting the community to celebrate this occasion. You are our superheroes!



## Blanche Collins Forum Hosts Graphic Novelist and Activist MariNaomi

On March 10th at the Michelle Obama Library, the Friends of the Long Beach Public Library hosted their first Blanche Collins Forum with a riveting conversation between comic artist MariNaomi and Blanche Collins Forum Chair Jess Baker-Shimabukuro. The conversation spanned across topics, such as MariNaomi's creative process, representation in media, banned books, and their activism such as the founding and maintaining the Cartoonists of Color Database, Queer Cartoonists Database, and Disabled Cartoonists Database—as well as a number of wombat facts. Board President Barbara Sosa referenced in her introduction for the event, City Librarian Blanche Collins—for whom the forum is named—would have been thrilled at the event due to her staunch activism against censorship, such as her fight against the LB City Council's attempt to censor the library's selection of "The Last Temptation of Christ" by Nikos Kazantzakis.

Around 35 people attended the spirited conversation between host and guest about their respective experiences growing up as Japanese Americans and Okinawan-American in the USA and the importance of representation in arts and literature. MariNaomi's journey as a comic artist and activist is inspiring, and they gave genuine advice to aspiring authors and artists who attended the event. Everyone enjoyed their warm-hearted humor.



*Jess Baker (right) highlights one of MariNaomi's (left) graphic memoirs*

The event was sponsored by the Friends of the Library and the Blanche Collins Forum, was free to the public, and featured a Q & A and book signing by MariNaomi. Some of their graphic memories were for sale from Sean Moor, formerly of Gatsby Books.

We thank our local Long Beach-based bookstores and coffee shops for posting fliers to promote the event.

To keep up to date with MariNaomi's work, their databases, visit her at <https://marinaomi.com>

### President's Message

Hello, Friends! It's that time of year when the weather starts getting warmer, the days get longer, and we all love living in Southern California – and especially Long Beach. Our city is blessed with great parks, a diverse community, and a wonderful gift – twelve marvelous neighborhood libraries.

The Friends do our best to support the entire library system. We are not a fund-raising group per se, but we turn the money we do receive back to the libraries to use at their discretion. This year, thanks to the generosity of our members and donors, the Friends of the Library will donate \$17,000 to the Library's "wish list." That amounts to \$1,000 each to the neighborhood libraries and \$1,000 each to six departments at BJK Main – Automated Services Bureau (ASB), Administration, Collection Services, Community Engagement & Outreach, Youth Services, and Teen & Emerging Adults.

The donations do not go to the City's General Fund but are deposited to a Special Project Fund, which is managed by the Friends on behalf of the Library. This way, the libraries can spend their "wish list" money to pay for program expenses at their own library. Need pizza and soda for a Teen Café? The Friends will pay for it. Want a new rug for Storytime? Buy it using your Friends funds? Need a new coffeemaker for the breakroom? The Friends have it covered. In fact, almost every program at the libraries is financially supported by the Friends.

We're proud of our contributions to our libraries. We are passionate about continuing to expand services and opportunities for Long Beach residents. And we are grateful to all our members and donors for sharing our pride and passion. Thank you!

On a personal note, I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Friends Board for their support and compassion this past year. My husband and best friend of more than 40 years died suddenly a year ago. Without the Board members – and my

dog Boomer – I would have spent many days hiding under the bedcovers. But they all worked together to keep me busy and occupied. Many thanks to you all.

*Barbara Sosa, President of FLBPL*

### See You at Our Annual Meeting and Luncheon, Saturday May 17

Please to join us on Saturday May 17, 2025 for the **Friend's Annual Meeting and Luncheon**. It will be held at The Grand on Willow St in Long Beach.

All of our guest speakers are from Long Beach, thus our theme, Celebrate the Long Beach Community. Justin Rudd, Long Beach's premiere volunteer, will join us along with Cristina Salvador Klenz and Somone Washington.

Cristina is a photojournalist and author of "Hidden: Life with California's Roma Families." Her current project, "Intersections in Time" finds her photographing residents of the streets of Long Beach. Somone D. Washington is the author of "The Best of All Things" a guide to transforming pain into purpose and challenges into triumphs.

More information to follow. Doors open at 11:00 am.

### Honor and Memorial Books

Since last Newsletter *William and Kathleen Nutting*, *Karen Warren*, and *Suzanne Soria* have donated books in memory of *Robert Bakovik*, a formerly active member of El Dorado Branch.

*James Cameron* has been honored by *Claudine Burnett*.

## Two City Departments Work to Enhance Health and Safety in our Libraries

Public libraries are unique entities serving their communities. Patrons of all ages, ethnicities, religious affiliations, gender, political opinions, educational backgrounds, health conditions, and economic status simultaneously visit our libraries each and every day. Each has their own immediate and long-term needs when turning into our doors. Just think of the depth and breadth of humanity we serve! And for free! Everyone is welcome but each patron is responsible to the Library Code of Conduct and the Municipal Codes (It's the law...).

This is particularly challenging in large cities, one of which we are. The City of Long Beach has been working on ensuring that our libraries are a safe place for everyone. There are several offices throughout the city collaborating to not only empower the library staff but also provide assistance to patrons living in insecure situations or with mental health challenges.

Ashley Holmes is a new staff member in Human Resources City Safety Bureau assigned to the BJK Main as a health and safety officer. Her responsibilities could be summarized as informal education, assessment, and problem-solving. She provides trainings to empowering staff: deescalating situations, maintaining safety for themselves and other patrons. With patrons, she works with them one-on-one when situations arise: communicates their personal responsibilities as library patrons (those Codes), and directs patrons experiencing difficulty to appropriate support services. She collaborates with other departments in the city that work with similar challenges. She also works in real time to find routes to resources along with the Social Services Offices and the Health Educators located in a few of our branches, as well as the City's Multi Service Center. She also handles incident reports that might result in suspension from the libraries for a period of time.

The city office of Health and Human Services Homeless Services Bureau also has staff of five clinicians assigned to our libraries: BJK Main, Twain, and Obama. This staff



*Ashley Holmes in her BJK Main Health and Human Safety office which she shares with Jessica Chamorra*

is overseen by social worker Jessica Chamorra, whose office and patron meeting area are also at Main. She and her staff hold appointments with patrons who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness, and also hold walk-in office hours. They work very closely with the Multi Services Center (part of LBHHS Department). Patrons are referred to Jessica and her staff by other city departments, library staff and Ashley Hines, and find them by signage in the branches. The staff also proactively reaches out to patrons who show both obvious and subtle needs for services. They know many of the regular patrons by name and have helped many find safety and shelter.

Social workers and social safety staff are not new to public libraries in the United States. Throughout history, libraries have been hubs for serving the needs of patrons in many different ways. Licensed social workers have been assigned to libraries for nearly two decades. Long Beach began a pilot program a few years ago to assess the need and efficacy.

Ashley Holmes and Jessica Chamorra have similar goals for the future of health and safety in our Long Beach Libraries: to continue supporting staff and patrons, develop additional training for staff to more appropriately assist patrons experiencing difficulty in the library, to empower the staff, and continue collaboration across the City, all to build and maintain a safe and healthful environment for all.

They are both grateful for the opportunity to assist in this mission and bring a breadth and depth of educational and work experience to make this happen.

## Welcome New Library Friends

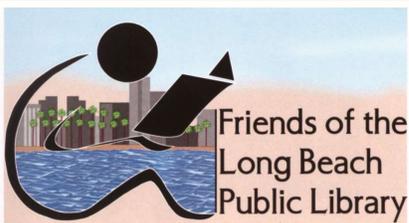
Welcome to our new Friends of the Library! If you have any questions, please email us [lb.libraryfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lb.libraryfriends@gmail.com).

*Devon Ablard  
Sonia Bautista  
Richard Bello  
Bruce Biedron  
Wendy Catron  
Carol Erickson*

*Pauline McMahon  
Gopakuman Menon  
Jean Oerich  
Timothy Richter  
Laura Graves Smith  
Daniel Villa*

## Use This QR Code → Friends Website

Have you visited our new website? We can still be found at [lbplfriends.org](http://lbplfriends.org), but now we have a fresh look and feel. It's even easier to purchase or renew a membership using the QR code below. Keep an eye out for more features and functions to come this year!



**President: Barbara Sosa**

**Editor: Diane Riska-Taylor**

**Contributors:** Samantha Aviles, Jess Baker-Shimabukuro, Ellen Butler, Jan Jackson, Caroline Martin, Lisa Moore, Barbara Sosa, and Diane Riska Taylor.

*The Friends of the Library newsletter is usually published three times annually for members in good standing.*

Visit our website at [www.lbplfriends.org](http://www.lbplfriends.org)

Contact us at [lb.libraryfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lb.libraryfriends@gmail.com)

## New and Renewing Super Friends

We would like to thank our new and renewing Super Friends since October 2024. We appreciate your generosity and support.

*Kaye Briegel  
Marlene Brown  
Bill & Fran Cahill  
Ever Galvan  
Jay & Pease Glaser  
Carol Hess*

*Jan Heverly  
Monica Leff  
Janet Lipson  
Roxanne Patmor  
Jewell Stindt  
Kelly Weber*

## Open Position on FLBPL Board: Barbara Egyud Scholarship Chair

Are you interested in volunteering, but not necessarily committed to attending Board meetings? Then, this might be a good fit for you.

We are looking for someone to assume the role of coordinating our annual Scholarship, supporting both employees and volunteers in our library system. No need to start from scratch. There are samples of how this program has been run for years by Linda Kimberly.

Scholarship applications are sent to our 12 libraries in early January. Employees and volunteers are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship. Two scholarships are awarded every year, and winners are presented at our Annual Meeting & Luncheon in May. Most of this position can be accomplished via email and phone calls. If you would like to lead the process of aiding several worthy library employees/volunteers further their education, or have additional questions, please email us at [lb.libraryfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lb.libraryfriends@gmail.com)

## Our Freedom to Read Freely Committee is Busy Planning Banned Book Week 2025

*Freedom to Read Freely* has been a primary mission of the Friends of the Long Beach Public Library since its inception over 60 years ago. Book banning remains an issue, not only in our country, but in our state as well.



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Our annual membership year is from July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025. Have you renewed your membership? *The date above your name on your mailing label shows when your membership expires.*

Your membership is important. Your contributions enable the Friends to purchase books and support other library programs and activities. As a member of the Friends, you show your concern for maintaining the resources and services of the Long Beach Public Library. You will be informed of the vital issues that affect the Library. We welcome contributions of any amount: both dues and contributions are tax deductible. A book will be donated to the library in the name of each Super Friend. Thank you for your support.

Please use this form for your renewal or give it to an acquaintance who might wish to join. Thank you for joining the Friends of the Long Beach Public Library. Or visit our new web site at [www.lbplfriends.org](http://www.lbplfriends.org)

- New Member or .....  Renewal
- Senior Membership ..... \$10                       Student Membership.....\$15
- Individual Membership..... \$20                       Family Membership.....\$25
- Super Friend ..... \$100 or more                       Patron Membership.....\$75
- Business Membership ..... \$200 or more                       Lifetime Membership.....\$1,000 or more

I want to participate in the following way:

- Serve on the Friends of the Library Board of Directors
- Volunteer in the Book Store

Name.....Address.....  
Zip.....Phone.....Email.....

Please join online using a credit card at [www.lbplfriends.org](http://www.lbplfriends.org) or by mail: make checks payable to the *Friends of the Long Beach Public Library*, and mail to: Friends of the Long Beach Public Library, PO Box 15733, Long Beach, CA, 90815-0733. Either way, our membership card will be mailed to you.