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The Importance of Woodbridge Libraries in the 1960s

Libraries are places where individuals gather to explore, interact, learn and imagine. Libraries allow the community to come together as one. There are many ways in which activities held at or sponsored by Woodbridge Township libraries were valuable to our community. Whether it be for celebration, a fundraiser, or interaction with one another, people learned and appreciated the possibilities we have had as a township. An example of fundraising is found in the October 31, 1968, issue of the Independent-Leader newspaper. It states, "the executive board will meet Wednesday, at 5 p.m. in the library as well as community members and is asking for donations for the Thanksgiving basket." Supporting this cause at the library was exceptionally important bringing township citizens together in unison.

Celebration was another valuable asset to the community, that was one of the many activities hosted by Woodbridge Libraries. It is demonstrated in the December 12, 1963, issue of the Independent-Leader stating, "The library staff holds its annual Christmas Party at 8:30 in the Library." This was an essential part of libraries because it was an example of one of many social gatherings that were hosted in a local Woodbridge library where people were able to gather as a community. Therefore, this event hosted by a Woodbridge Township library was significant because it strengthened community friendships. Opportunity was also provided within libraries. For example, in the November 19, 1969, issue of The Middlesex County Leader-Press, people were able to preview audio visual. "The library will be used as a multi-media center with the

accent on study carrels which will permit students to preview film strips or other audio visual.”

That was a great advantage that the library offered to students who weren't able to access that information elsewhere, and was something very important to the community.

In addition, libraries were community builders. Libraries host a spot for groups to meet and do numerous activities. This is shown in the November 19, 1969, issue of the The Middlesex County Leader-Press, where a schedule was listed of when group meetings would take place. For example, “The Adult Discussion Group of the Free Public Library will meet tonight at the Henry Inman Branch Library, 607 Inman Avenue, Colonia... November 20 to November 26 ALL AGES Iselin ‘Children and places’ Exhibit of Photographs... ADULTS—November 20 Henry Inman-Book Discussion Group- 7:30 to 9 P.M...November 26 Henry Inman Chess club— 6:30 to 9 P.M... November 29 Henry Inman- Library Club.” All of these programs were hosted at different Woodbridge libraries for the community to enjoy, which was extremely significant. So many new building blocks for children and communities have also taken place in libraries. Being a friend to children of many generations is a very important aspect that libraries have continued to fulfill, from holding encouraging contests such as reading contests like the one in the July 3, 1963, issue of The Independent-Leader where, “Fords Library Arranges Contest for Best Report,” to spreading the incredible amount of information that they contain. Woodbridge Township libraries have done exactly that.

Also, in the July 3, 1963, issue of The Independent-Leader, within an article titled, “Citizen Group Endorses Municipal Library Plan,” Mr. O’ Connor states, “In an era when we are striving to provide our children with better education, we cannot in good conscience fail to

provide them with the necessary tools to obtain this education,"when discussing why we should continue to expand on libraries in Woodbridge. This summarized the importance of libraries to the community's education.

While libraries aren't mainly about the knowledge that was gained there, it does play a vital role. With that being said, libraries are still more than that. They were phenomenal social communities for children. That was demonstrated in the December 6, 1967, issue of the Middlesex County Leader-Press, when the "Children's Movie is to be offered at town's libraries." Many events like that one continue to take place today and continue to be just as important now as they were back then. Another sponsored activity that was important to the community was a "Library trip ...in December for several classes to visit the Iselin Public Library." This is also found in the November 19, 1969, issue of The Middlesex County Leader-Press. This gave the students of the Woodbridge Township community a chance to explore the library and obtain knowledge, which was a necessity to a strong community.

Lastly, Woodbridge libraries also gave citizens the convenience of borrowing records. "Music Lovers Can Borrow Records At Library Dec.1," which was posted in The Middlesex County Leader-Press on November 19,1969. This was very meaningful to the community because it saved citizens money and let them appreciate the joy that music offers.

In conclusion, activities held and/or sponsored by libraries were and continue to be a necessity to our community. Woodbridge Township libraries have enabled us to perform many activities in the past, and will continue to do the same for future generations. The Woodbridge

library system was very valuable to our growing community back in the 1960s, as it is now, and forever will be.