

Dharshna Sivasankaran

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Fords Middle School

Mr.Zammit

In the year of 1877, Thomas Barren's public library was built and opened as the first public library in Middlesex County. Many years later in 1964, the neighborhood libraries united as branches of a new municipal library system and that was the start of the Woodbridge Public Library system. The year is now 2014, making it the 50th anniversary of the Library system. Now, when one thinks about a library and its purpose, the first thought that usually pops into one's mind would be a place where we can get books on all kinds of varying topics, and today, get movies or use computers. However, a library can be used for other things too. The library can be a useful place to hold meetings, different entertainment events, and it can also sponsor different programs and causes to benefit the community. Here are a few ways the library was used for different purposes in the 1960s.

A library can be a great place for having meetings. One reason would be that it is quiet and peaceful at all times. In the 1960's. many clubs held meetings there and the newspapers would report this, sometimes giving a free public invitation for anyone to come and join in. The October 26, 1961 edition of the Independent Leader gave a few sentences of a meeting for the Federated Women's Club of Iselin with a woman by the name of Mrs. Herbert B. Williams in the Iselin Library; the meeting was about the Federation Days and how the representatives of the Club would attend it. In the same issue, the newspaper also said that the Women's Club was sponsoring a lecture, that was going to be about cancer, by a doctor from the American Cancer Society at 2 P.M. on November 15 and that everyone was invited.

The library would also be a place where different events could be held. For example, in the March 3, 1960 issue of the Independent Leader, it stated that a TB x-ray sponsored by the P.T.O. would take place on the coming Tuesday of March 29 from 2 to 5 P.M. and 6 to 8 P.M. at the Colonia Library. Another example in the Independent Leader was that the Barron Library would be closed because it was serving as a voting poll during the school board election, on the coming Tuesday of the February 4, 1960 issue. In addition, card parties would be held at the library as well for, simply, to have some fun. The February 18, 1960 edition of the Independent Leader announced a card party being held that very night at the Fords Library, hosted by the Women's Club. The Women's Club also hosted a Spring Bazaar (an event similar to that of a place to go shopping) at the Fords Library on March 31, 1960 (posted in the March 24, 1960 issue). On August 16, 1962, the Independent Leader said that there would be a sea shell exhibit at the Barron Library on August 22. The libraries would be used for other events too, like movie nights; and be a place that different clubs and groups could use as well. In one way or another, all of these events were a form of entertainment for the public who were a part of it.

Not only were different events and meetings held at the libraries, but the libraries would also sponsor good causes that would help the neighborhood. For example, in the December 23, 1965 issue of the Independent Leader, it announced that the Woodbridge Library Director, Mr. Beckerman, had developed a 6-month pre-school program which would help around 40 kids, mainly 4-year olds (who need help in some way), to learn. Some of the program highlights would be that all of the kids would also get a complete medical and dental checkup, as well as hot meal every day. In my opinion, the library director did a great thing by helping those kids because getting a good education is very important in life. In this way, the library helped the community by, not hosting an event, but starting one.

Therefore, there were many activities that the branches of the Woodbridge Library system held or sponsored that were valuable to the community. Important meetings could be held in the quiet, peaceful environment. Different events were held at the libraries with purposes of entertainment, medical health for the people, education, or completing important matters like school board elections. In the newspaper issues that were nearing the year of 1964, it would almost always mention how the libraries were going to unite as branches of the system. That was a clear sign to me that it was definitely something that the public were looking forward to. All of this may have been in the 1960s, but it still continues on today. For example, when I take my music theory exams, they are held at one of the branches of the Woodbridge Library system. Libraries are still useful to us today, when it comes to the books *and* when it doesn't. That is why the 50th anniversary of our municipal library system is something that we should all make use of and celebrate.