

Austin Douglas
Word Count: 606

South Waco library celebrates 50th birthday

The South Waco Library celebrated its 50th birthday this weekend, marking half a century as a community pillar of learning, creativity, and connection for residents of all ages.

The event, attended by families, local patrons, and former staff members, highlighted the library's role as a gathering place in South Waco. Kayla Jackson, the current manager of the branch, emphasized the importance of the library to the community.

"It's the branch's birthday; the library itself is 125 years old," said Jackson, who has worked in the library system for 20 years. "We try to make this a place that they can hang out. You can have people studying, you can have kids playing, but we're just the place to hang out."

The South Waco Library has grown to become more than just a place to borrow books. It has transformed into a center for community engagement, offering a variety of classes, events, and activities that bring people together. Angela Darnell, a librarian at the branch, believes the library's efforts are critical to its success.

"We do a lot of events for the community here," Darnell said. "I love that they provide community classes. I see big changes that are gonna happen and be for the good of the library."

Darnell explained that the library's sense of community is what keeps people coming back, highlighting the strong bonds formed through shared activities.

Local residents attended the event and believe in the library's future success as well. Margaret, a local mother attending the celebration with her two children, expressed her gratitude for the library's programs aimed at young readers.

"I want them to be into books, into reading and everything," she said. "They have little events sometimes, and the kids seem to like it a lot," said Margaret.

The library's family-friendly events have drawn generations of Wacoans, and for many, the library represents more than just a place to borrow books. For Margaret, it is a way to instill a love for reading in her children.

Barbara Frank, a retired librarian who worked in the Waco-McLennan County Library system for 22 years, reflected on how her experience at the South Waco Library influenced her career. She began volunteering with the library system in high school and later worked as the South Waco branch manager before retiring.

"When I saw those children come and hear the story time and their reaction to all the books, I thought this was amazing," Frank said. "And that's why I became a librarian."

Frank believes libraries, especially public ones, are vital to building relationships within communities.

“It’s a lot about people...public libraries especially are geared toward that,” she said. “I just think it’s special anytime you can celebrate a library.”

Frank’s journey from volunteer to branch manager highlights the lasting impact libraries can have on individuals and communities alike.

As the South Waco Library celebrates 50 years, its staff and patrons are optimistic about what the future holds. With continued efforts to provide classes, community events, and a welcoming space for all, the library remains a beacon of learning and connection for the Waco community.

“I see big changes that are gonna happen and they’ll be for the good of the library,” said Darnell.

With ongoing efforts to provide valuable resources, events, and programs, the South Waco Library aims to remain a vital part of the community for years to come. The celebration of its 50th anniversary served not only as a reflection of its rich history but also as a reminder of the library’s commitment to fostering learning and connection in South Waco.