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Librarian Linda Waldroup to Retire

By Sophie Braccini



Linda Waldroup in the Moraga Library

Photo Sophie Braccini

Linda Waldroup, Moraga's librarian for the past nine years, will retire on January 7, 2011. Waldroup managed the library at a turning point in its history. According to all who know her, Waldroup is an outstanding librarian who was able to transform the Moraga library into one of the strongest facilities in Contra Costa County as far as activity programming for all ages is concerned. Her care and diplomacy made her a widely-loved figure in Moraga, she will be missed.

Contra Costa Library administration at the same time, in April of 1995," recalls Lafayette librarian Susan Weaver. Waldroup made a career change after 20 years in retail, managing a Berkeley pharmacy with her husband. She was in fact returning to her first career; she started out as a librarian in Vallejo in the 70's.

In the pre-internet age, librarians were the gatekeepers of knowledge; searches were done manually, shuffling through drawers of index cards. Now with electronic search tools and books,

libraries have morphed into community centers where residents congregate not only to research and read, but to participate in activities. "I didn't know a thing about programming," confessed Waldroup, "but with increased partnering and strong support from the Friends of the Moraga Library, we were able to vastly grow our programming."

Partnering with community organizations, Waldroup brought the Moraga library into the 21st century. "She has been a tremendous librarian," says Friends of the Moraga Library president David Kruegel, "She has improved and enhanced the programming for adults in particular, and as a result we enjoy some of the strongest programs in the county." Kruegel cited, among other events, a series of speakers from the San Francisco Art Museums and the new music program.

What made the programming so interesting was Waldroup's ability to find interesting topic and speakers for the library and 'book them' before they became expensive celebrities. For example, when Madeline Levine's "The Price of Privilege" came out, Waldroup was the first to call her agent and book her for a talk that filled the library well beyond its normal limits. She was also the one to secure Abraham Verghese, author of "Cutting for Stone", the last selection of the Lamorinda Reads program, for a talk that concluded the 2010 tricity program.

Lamorinda Reads is also a program that can be credited to Waldroup's creativity, along with her colleagues in Lafayette and Orinda. "Increased cooperation between our three libraries made sense," said Weaver, "I was thrilled to be able to work with her when I arrived at the Lafayette li-

brary. We got together right away with Orinda Librarian Caroline Gick and have had so much fun planning the Lamorinda Reads yearly program." The next cooperative program will be in conjunction with Saint Mary's College, related to the university's presentation of the "Lee and Grant" exhibition early next year.

"She is such a wonderful person to work with," says Gick. Pam Jahner, who has been the Moraga Librarian Assistant for 27 years, will miss her too. "She created a real team atmosphere among staff," says Jahner, who has worked with several librarians during her tenure, "and she was able to foster a very positive interaction with the community."

Waldroup will be leaving a thriving organization that will nonetheless have to face financial challenges in the years to come. "She has planned the programming for the next three months to make the transition easier," says Kruegel, "that's emblematic of who she is, a very thoughtful and dedicated person."

"I'm going to miss her, she is a special person," Kruegel adds, "Mayor Ken Chew said that the Library was the heart and soul of the community; I will add that Linda was the heart and soul of the library."

A new librarian, Beth Girshman, has been hired to replace Waldroup. She is the adult services/community outreach librarian at the Jones Library in Amherst, Massachusetts. She will have to fill some pretty big shoes.



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