

National Library Week Volunteer Appreciation Day at the Oak Ridge Public Library

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on April 26, 2017)

April 9-15, 2017, was National Library Week, a time to celebrate libraries and the work they do to support and build communities. During this week, Oak Ridge Public Library joined libraries in schools, campuses and communities nationwide in celebrating the many ways libraries are transforming their communities every day through the services and invaluable expertise they offer.

I personally use our library for much of the research for *Historically Speaking*. The Oak Ridge Room, the microfiche and the actual newspaper archives have all been valuable research sources for me over the years. I can't say enough good about the staff. All of them know me and are eager to assist in my research. I have yet to make a request that was not addressed professionally and completely.

It is also rewarding to know that copies of all the books I have published are on file for loan at the library. Here are just a few of the history related links from the library's web page:

These links will work in the online version, for the hardcopy version published in the newspaper, use:
<http://www.oakridgetn.gov/department/Library/Reference/Oak-Ridge-Room>

[Oak Ridge Cemeteries](#)

[New pre-Oak Ridge historical photos available for viewing \(Oak Ridger article\)](#)

[Community Television Videos now available for check out](#)

[Project Ownership Maps](#)

[Books by Oak Ridge Authors](#)

[Books about Oak Ridge](#)

[Periodical and Newspaper Articles about Oak Ridge](#)

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[Choose material listed on the Oak Ridge bibliography](#)

[More Resources](#)

Although I have spoken about the tremendous value the library staff are to me, public libraries often rely on volunteers to help with the work of maintaining order in a busy library. Volunteers help clean and straighten shelves, unpack new books, set up for story times, and a host of other jobs that would go overlooked without their help.

Oak Ridge Public Library is lucky to have the help of many volunteers who give their time out of sheer love for the library. Many of you readers may well have been volunteers at our library at one time or the other. I am pleased to have been allowed to volunteer as a board member of the Friends of the Oak Ridge Public Library for several years. So, there are many different ways to volunteer to support our library.

In 2016, there were over 50 volunteers who gave more than 20 hours of their time and many, many more who stopped in to help when they could. Those of us who love libraries and books, are more than happy to volunteer to help support the needs of the library.

As part of National Library Week, Oak Ridge Public Library celebrated National Library Volunteer Day on Thursday, April 13, 2017, to express the staff's appreciation and gratitude to the large group of our library

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volunteers. These library volunteers give selflessly of their time to help build a community of readers, book lovers, and forward thinkers. The staff truly appreciate the help and vitality these eager volunteers bring to the library.

Of the many volunteers in attendance at the Volunteer Day reception and celebration, Buford Carter received the Big Ed's donation for the most volunteer hours on record (through 2016 yearend) – 19,691.75. WOW, can you imagine that! Buford is truly a dedicated volunteer!!!

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Raymond Land received the Hank's gift card for top hours in 2016 – 344.50 hours

Lecie Holt received the Ferrell shop gift card also for top hours in 2016 – 236.75

Phyllis Phillips received the Soup Kitchen gift certificate and the Dogwood Lapel Pin for longest standing volunteer in the children's Room – 33 years. (She was not in attendance due to illness. The staff has mailed her gift to her.)

All other donations, foods and gifts, were donated and part of a drawing as gifts to the volunteers.

I asked Kathy McNeilly, current director of the Oak Ridge Public Library to give me some information about the history of our library. She provided the following:

"In the beginning of Oak Ridge, the people here formed many clubs and committees. One of the committees formed, in 1943, was a Library Committee.

"This committee decided, to get the public library going, they would ask the members to pool their books. The library's collection began with those original books. (No, we don't still have any of those books!)

"They then had the city government hire Elizabeth Edwards straight out of Columbia University in New York, from their library school. She was the first director and began the policy of the director having a Masters in Library Science.

"Books were bought and they got ready.

"From the beginning, the Oak Ridge Public Library was to focus on popular, recreational reading. The committee said that we were surrounded by technical libraries and ORPL was to be different.

"They opened their doors for the first time, on May 29, 1944. You couldn't check out materials that first day, but, by the next week, June 5, you could.

"The first library was located on Kentucky Avenue across from where the TenKucky Building is now. The TenKucky buildings used to house the town government.

"The second library was in the same building but up and across from the Alexander Inn. This, the third library building opened on Thanksgiving weekend, 1970. (I interviewed in December, 1970, but started at ORPL on January 4, 1971).

Thanks Kathy for that brief history of our library!

Over the years there have been seven Oak Ridge Public Library Directors:

1944-1948 Elizabeth "Betty" Edward,

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1948 – 1960 (not sure of exact dates) Minnie Duncan, and Interim - Patricia Postell

1960-1963 Reid Howy

1963-1976 Patricia Postell

1976-1998 Connie Battle

1998- Present Kathy McNeilly

Robin Nettles, Volunteer Coordinator, said, "The volunteers assure the books are neatly shelved and in order will be noticed by the public, however, most volunteer tasks are much needed back office tasks (mending items, scanning photos, unpacking, labeling, etc.) that the public may not be aware are being handled by volunteers."

Robin continued, "They are an indispensable group of people whose time and talent is greatly appreciated and who are a joy to be around."

Oak Ridge Public Library Director, Kathy McNeilly, had this to say about the National Library Week's Volunteer Reception and Recognition, "It was a special chance to say "Thanks for all you do!" to our great volunteers. The Public Library has such wonderful volunteers that give of their time and support us in what we do for our community. With their service, much is possible. All of the staff join me in giving appreciation during National Library Week and all year long."

Kathy concluded by saying, "A good time was had by all."

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Left to right, front row - Buford Carter, Lecie Holt, Nancy Basford
2nd row – Linda Cloutier, Lillian Hise, Connie Larimer, Stephanie Hannan, Jordan Reed (staff)
3rd row – Barbara Gritzner, Debbie McKnight, Tahmida Ahsan
4th row – William Gwin (staff), Gail Nichols, Judy Crutcher, Judy Osucha, Robin Nettles (staff)
5th row - Kathy McNeily (Director), Jeffrey Johnson, Michael Boyd, Michael Pesce, Ben Kass, Michael Raymond, Marilyn DeVries, Katie Stewart (staff) and there is one head barely visible – Ruth Dypolt