

HISTORY of the LACEY FRIENDS

Lacey's first public library opened in March of 1930 in the Lacey School. Books and other materials were donated by members of the community. At first the library was open two afternoons and evenings a week but grew to serving 400 books a month within the first year. With the help of fundraising events, donated books, and Work Progress Administration (WPA) funds, hours were extended to five days a week. Although located in a school the library remained open during the summer and by 1937 was serving 600 patrons. The library closed when the number of students grew and the school needed the space.

From the end of the 1930's until the early 1960's Lacey was without a public library. A bookmobile from the South Puget Sound Regional library came once a week. In 1963, Articles of Incorporation for the creation of The North Thurston Library Association were filed with the Washington State Secretary of State. The Association's purpose was to collect donations to construct a library building for the City of Lacey. William Stephens was the first to be elected President and by the fall of 1964, virtually the entire Lacey community banded together to raise the money to rent a temporary facility. Auctions, pony rides, car washes, spaghetti dinners and rummage sales were held.

In the fall of 1965, the Association obtained their own second hand bookmobile and after renovations located it in the Market Square parking lot on the corner of College St. and Lacey Blvd. Open three days a week they were serving 1,800 patrons by the end of the first year.

In November 1966 Lacey Library opened its doors to the public at a small retail location at 4140 Market Square. The Association paid for the rent and utilities while South Puget Sound Regional Library provided 5,000 books and the first part-time librarian Anne Jewell. During the Market Square years the library became associated with the Timberland Regional Library. The Lacey Library increased in size from 2600 sq. ft. to 4800 sq. ft. when it relocated to the Lacey Village Shopping Center in 1976. By 1988 the Lacey Library had the second largest circulation in the seven county Timberland System. The Association eventually collected over \$100,000 in donations towards the new facility.

In 1972, The Friends of the Lacey Library was created. Carol Getchman and Anna Mae Irely were the first to be elected Co-Presidents. In 1982, The Friends urged the City Council to annex the library into the Timberland Regional Library District. By the late 1980's heavy use of the library made it imperative to find a new and larger facility. The Friends were advocates to the City Council, urging them to commit to build a new library. The City Council agreed to fund half the cost with the remaining costs raised through private donations and federal grants. With support from the Friends, The North Thurston Library Association, and the entire community, the new library building was dedicated at its current location in 1991.

Today, the Friends consistently provide over \$30,000 each year to support the Lacey Library. Most of the funds come from sales of gently used books donated by the public. These sales are held six times a year. In addition, used books are also available for sale in The Book Place whenever the library is open. Some of the programs sponsored by the Friends are Lacey Loves to Read, Books for Babies, and the Children's Summer Reading Program. The Friends also contributed \$126,000 towards the library's remodels in 2000, 2011 and 2020.

In addition to book sales in support of over 150 Lacey Library Programs, The Friends support a network of community organizations by providing books to the military, long term care facilities, seniors, and others who promote literacy in our community. In 2019 the 400 member Friends organization received the City of Lacey Compassion Award for their fundraising efforts.

In 2021, Timberland Regional Library introduced the Anywhere Van to support mobile services for underserved areas with the Lacey Library as the hub for Thurston County. On February 18, 2022 the Hawks Prairie Timberland Library was opened. Holly Paxson, who has managed the Lacey Library since 2012, manages both facilities. This 2,500 sq. ft. rented facility is located in a former retail setting on the corner of Martin Way and Marvin Road. The Friends have used books for sale at this location whenever the library is open.

There were over 800,000 materials borrowed from the library in 2022. Of those, 475,000 were physical, and 325,000 were digital. When the library opened in 1966, typewriters were the standard business machine - today computers and photo copiers are available for patron use. Every election day the library becomes a voting center and each spring hosts AARP tax preparation services. We wish to thank the community for their support. Without you none of this would be possible!

For more information or to get involved, contact us or visit one of the sites below.

E-Mail: laceylibraryfriends@gmail.com

Website: laceyfriends.org

Facebook: @friendsofthelaceylibrary

Instagram: @friendsofthelaceylibrary

Reference Sources:

City of Lacey Museum

City of Lacey Historical Commission Publication September 1995

Friends of the Lacey Library Historical Collection (1963 – Present)

Timberland Regional Library

Operational Statistics provided by Mgmt. of the Lacey Library

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