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DeKalb County News and Notes

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At AFPL's Central Library, Taj Luster writes a letter to support children whose families are in the military.

military personnel. The program was developed as a way to connect with President Barack Obama's "United We Serve" initiative, a national focus on volunteerism. An equally important goal was to give military children moral support from their peers. Children's librarians incorporated the Children's Letter Writing Campaign into their summer programs by providing stationery, pens and crayons to use for

their letter writing along with "letter drop boxes" for children to place their letters. A reading list of various children's books about parents serving in the military was also developed. More than 200 children wrote letters during the campaign, enabling them to combine composition practice with their Summer Reading Program activities and giving them a way to learn about and feel good about volunteering. »»

Cobb County news and notes

The Cobb County Public Library System now provides Powerspeak Languages, a new world-language learning product, to its patrons. "We're thrilled to have language-learning products available at our library," said Jonathan McKeown, associate director of central and outreach services. "This will give our patrons the opportunity to learn a new language at their own pace." The program offers Spanish, French, German, Mandarin Chinese and English for Spanish-speakers. The courses use a variety of multisensory activities including a combination of scored online activities, exercises, lessons and games. Course activities are bound together with an adventure story containing graphics, audio, video, music and an intuitive way to track progress. Learners also practice speaking and writing in a variety of interactive modules that simulate real conversations with native speakers. Powerspeak is available from any Internet connection. »»

Dawson County news and notes

Betty Bean, a beloved retired children's librarian for the Dawson County Library, has passed away at the age of 85. According to Chestatee Regional Library System Director Claudia Gibson, Bean's vitality and enthusiasm were contagious. "She affected the lives of countless children who have walked through the library doors,"

Gibson said. "Until she retired at age 80 in 2006, children returned as teenagers just to say hello and get a hug. The younger library patrons were still treated to charismatic storytelling, raucous songs and fun finger plays. Miss Betty would still get down on the floor and play with the youngest of them."

To commemorate Bean's work and to celebrate the joy she brought to so many, a memorial fund was created to honor her. Almost \$500 in donations were received, and they were used to purchase a play cottage (known as "The Bean House"), a hopscotch board and books for the children's area at the Dawson County Library. »»



"Miss Betty" Bean

DeKalb County news and notes

The DeKalb County Public Library board of trustees has appointed Alison Weissinger acting director of the system. Weissinger will take over from Darro Willey, who will retire in October after 15 years as director. She began her career in the DeKalb system in 1997 as a youth services librarian. Since then, she has served as a branch manager at several branches. Most recently, Weissinger has worked as the system's adult services coordinator, overseeing adult programming, literacy and outreach services and the library's website.

The board also approved a service reduction plan to reduce costs forced by budget cuts. Under the plan, the Briarcliff Library is closing in September and the new Stonecrest Library, which was expected to begin service in September, will be delayed in opening until May 2011.

Savings from these actions will permit the library to move ahead with plans to reopen the Hairston Crossing and Salem-Panola branch libraries in late October. Both libraries have been closed for renovation and expansion work, which is now completed.

The DeKalb County Public Library unveiled three bold and colorful designs Aug. 21 as staff announced the winners of its Design-a-Library-Card Art Contest at the Tucker-Reid H. Cofer Library branch. Library officials are using interest in the contest and its winning designs to promote library card sign-up.

Northwest Georgia news and notes



From left: Hunter, Boyer and Simon

Twelve-year-old Deondria Boyer, a seventh-grader at Tucker Middle School, was the winner in the youth age group. Her design emphasizes how reading can broaden your knowledge of the world. Mollie Simon, 14, was the teen winner with a geometric design and a message to “Read On.” Mollie is a ninth-grader at Chamblee High School. The winner in the adult category was Deborah Hunter. Her design makes books the foundation on which a strong community is built.

“We’re extremely pleased to have given our patrons this special opportunity to design our library card,” noted Willey. “More importantly, however, we hope the excitement of the contest will inspire people to get a library card if they don’t have one. It’s something no one should be without.” Limited-edition library cards featuring the winning designs became available at all DeKalb County Public Library branches in September. ▶▶

Gwinnett County news and notes

From hundreds of nominated projects, the Gwinnett County Public Library’s Hamilton Mill Branch has been selected as a Building of America Award project and will be a featured Gold Medal Winner on its Web page at www.buildingofamerica.com. The Building of America



Hamilton Mill interior

Network showcases the most innovative, unique and challenging new projects — projects that are particularly noteworthy and/or give back to their respective communities. ▶▶

The Dalton-Whitfield Public Library, headquarters of the Northwest Georgia Regional Library (NGRL), has been approached by the city of Dalton to participate in the planning process of a new community center, currently under construction. Dalton Mayor David Pennington specifically requested a library presence in the new facility, which will open in mid-2011. Library Director Joe Forsee was a member of the original steering committee of the community center. Deputy Director Nick Fogarty is a current committee member.

Project coordinator and Dalton Parks and Recreation Department head Ronnie Nix says the library presence will not be a full-service library satellite but will provide books and other library materials for youth in the area to experience what a public library has to offer. He hopes that children exposed to the library area in the community center will be inspired have their parents take them to visit the public library, which is a few minutes’ drive away. “We will have a prime location within the community center,” said Fogarty. “The library will be a focal point when people enter the facility.”

Mayor Pennington stated that a public library presence was high on his list of priorities for the new center. “We are doing this to maximize our community resources,” he said. “The key to a successful future is education, and the key to education is reading. We want to put the books in the hands of our children, particularly those who have never visited a library or those who don’t know what a public library is.”

In other news, following an announcement by NGRL that service to homebound patrons would be discontinued in the near future due to budget cuts, the service has received new hope.

The library employee who had been doing homebound service to library patrons in Gordon, Murray and Whitfield counties for several decades retired this past spring. With cuts in state funding to the public library, filling that job was not an option for the cash-strapped system. A plea for community volunteers to handle delivery service was met with a welcome offer from William Bronson, publisher of the Dalton *Daily Citizen*, for contract newspaper delivery drivers to handle the book delivery to homebound residents.

Starting in July, newspaper carriers began delivering books to homebound readers in the three-county region. Library staff will continue to work with patrons on reading preferences, assemble the books and place them in containers for carriers to pick up. ▶▶