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Georgia Library Spotlight - Commerce Public Library

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Commerce Public Library

When the Commerce Public Library learned that Korea-based business SK Battery America was coming to Georgia in the winter of 2018, library staff eagerly adopted the opportunity to help introduce Korean and Asian culture to the Jackson County community. Libraries are a wonderful place to bridge gaps of curiosity and information and responding to the changing needs of a community is one of the many things libraries do best. Over the last year and a half, staff have looked for fun opportunities to incorporate cultural learning into programming, community building, and collection development at Commerce.

For starters, the library had the Atlanta Chinese Dance Company visit for a celebration of Lunar New Year in January 2020, right before COVID-19 restrictions began. It didn't take long for word to spread, and the relationship officer for SK Battery America, Steven Jahng, soon approached the library and began donating his time to present monthly culture programs. During COVID-19 restrictions, the library first resumed programs outside in the Memorial Garden before eventually moving programs to a Zoom platform. These programs continue to take place monthly and cover everything from

temples, the Hangul alphabet, sports, and travel.

In September 2020, the library celebrated Chuseok, a Korean holiday for giving thanks. SK Battery America donated traditional rice treats in gift wrapped boxes to all program attendees, and local Korean barbecue restaurant owner Mr. Kim donated additional treats. Commerce Library Manager Angel Abounader said, "it's been really beautiful seeing these programs come together and the community collaboration that has occurred as a result." She was also very happy to share that SK Battery America donated \$30,000 to the Commerce Library in November, and she has begun working on an extensive book and multimedia collection

reflecting Korean culture, authors, and illustrators that will feature material for all ages. The collection will include children's picture books, travel, history, food, popular fiction, language materials, K-pop, and more. As a part of PINES, this generous donation will not only benefit the library's local community but will support borrowing for library patrons all over the state.

With another year behind them, the library was not able to have a large Lunar celebration this year; however, Library Assistant Xiaohong Hart helped ensure the library was decorated with paper lanterns, children's crafts, and books



Mayor Clark Hill, Library Manager Angel Abounader, CEO SK Battery America Mr. Junho Hwang, and City Manager James Wascher with a donation to the Commerce Library

about the holiday. In addition, two local engineers from SK Battery America, Andrew Rogers and Ryan Shim, read a bilingual picture book on Facebook in both English and Korean, while Mrs. Hart read one aloud in Chinese. The library also gave patrons the opportunity to pick

up a take-home kit to make their own Zen garden. The library hopes to continue to offer engaging programs as the community grows and is overjoyed over the opportunity to house such a large Korean collection that patrons all over the state will be able to enjoy.