

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY

FOUNDATION

transformations

SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER FOR CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY SUPPORTERS

*University City
Regional Library
opened in February,
featuring a beautiful
facade of windows,
perfect for reading.*



FEATURING

A welcoming haven in challenging times

How the Library fights
isolation and encourages
community involvement
and action

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Waddell makes transformative gift

Another Library champion
emerges for new Main
as a hub for civic and
educational events

PLUS...

Notable News

Topping out, branch
improvements, and an
easy way to make an
impact today

Dear Library supporters,

Serving on the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation board, I've had the privilege of visiting nearly every library in Mecklenburg County. Whether working, reading, attending events, or volunteering, each branch stands out for its unique personality, shaped by its community. The dedicated staff plays a key role in creating welcoming spaces that meet the needs and interests of local residents.

Most know the Library as a place to check out and read books. And thankfully, the Library continues to work to build its collection of books and materials that the community wants. However, the Library is so much more...

It's a place **where human and social services reside as a resource** – which means libraries must be equipped to assist and support the community at a greater level. It's awesome to have partners such as Novant Health offering wellness hubs at several branches and PNC Bank supporting early literacy efforts for young children.

Finally, **the Library is meeting people where they are** with MoLi, the mobile library, and with MiLA – the mobile internet lab. I've witnessed firsthand how beneficial it is to have these mobile resources — I met a young woman and mom who used the Library's computer resources to obtain a job and eventually learned that she was from my hometown. She was energized about the next steps for her family, and we both embraced this special moment.

As the Library continues to evolve, its impact speaks volumes and literally changes lives. Please join our efforts by getting involved and consider giving towards the campaign for the new Main Library.

With gratitude,



Helen Hope Kimbrough
Chair, Board of Directors
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library hosted "Parasols & Petticoats: A Conversation with Julia Quinn," featuring the internationally acclaimed author of the Bridgerton series. Board Chair Helen Hope Kimbrough (left) served as the moderator for the popular event.





A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

How the Library builds community and combats isolation



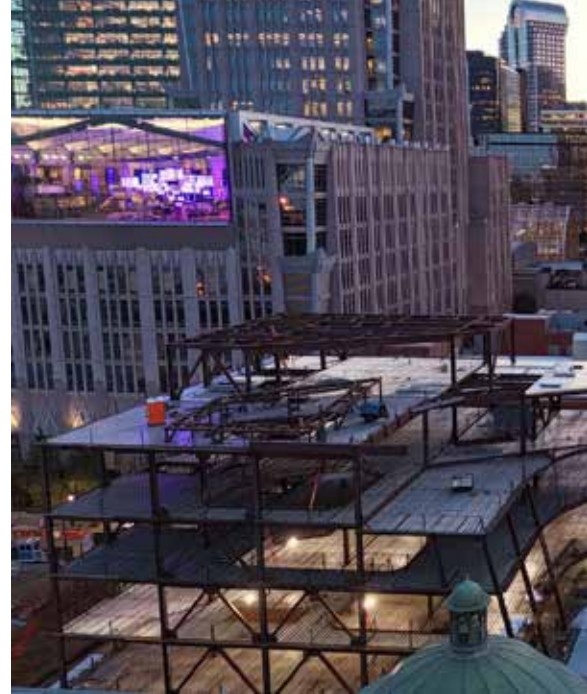
Marked by the launch of new facilities, significant renovations, and generous contributions from the community including public support from Mecklenburg County and private support from our donors, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is undergoing a remarkable transformation.

With each new branch and upgraded space, the Library is not only expanding its reach but also creating inviting environments where people can connect. From morning storytimes to digital literacy workshops to job training programs, the Library offers countless opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Each branch has its own unique personality, reflecting the needs and character of its neighborhood, making every visit feel personal and every customer feel welcome. For those who may feel disconnected, whether due to age, mobility, or life circumstances, the Library provides a friendly space where they can feel valued and supported. As our community continues to evolve, the Library's role as a hub for learning and connection will only grow stronger, and your support even more important.

The notable North Carolina senator, educator and philanthropic leader lauds the project for its commitment to access

Dr. Joyce Davis Waddell makes transformative investment in new Main



Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation is thrilled to announce a generous gift from Dr. Joyce Davis Waddell to the CommonSpark campaign, a public-private partnership intended to infuse \$165 million into improving lives and building a stronger community in Mecklenburg County including the construction of a new Main Library.

Devoted public servant, distinguished educator and former librarian, Dr. Waddell has been a stalwart advocate for lifelong learning for over three decades. Her commitment to educational progress and excellence includes 21 years with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and recent philanthropic support for her alma mater University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her work in education has shaped the lives of countless individuals, and this continued dedication serves as a testament to her lasting impact on the Charlotte community.

Dr. Waddell has served in the North Carolina Senate of the 40th district since 2015, the first African American woman from Mecklenburg County to do so. Waddell is a graduate of South Carolina State University and holds master's degrees from UNC Charlotte, North Carolina A&T State University and Appalachian State University. She

earned her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

"I am honored to be a part of the growth of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and to help create educational opportunities for the people they serve," Waddell said. "Mecklenburg County is my home, and my family, friends, neighbors and I all benefit from a strong public library system. I've been devoted to my community for decades. I know how important it is to build spaces and offer ways to engage and learn together. When we support each other and lift each other up, we all grow stronger together."

In recognition of her investment, the event space in the new Main Library will be named in her honor, the Dr. Joyce Davis Waddell Event Space. The expansive fifth-floor space will serve as a venue for community engagement, educational programming, and cultural events, and will accommodate upward of 300 guests.

The Dr. Joyce Davis Waddell Event Space will be the region's vibrant epicenter for national and international conferences and events with a focus on education, the arts, literature, humanities, current events, open discourse, and more. The Library anticipates that the space will be in high demand when it opens.



We're Topping Out

On February 12, we gathered with Rodgers | Leeper and their tradespeople and guests to watch the final steel beam being installed, marking the completion of the framing for the new Main Library. Library trustees, Foundation board members, CommonSpark supporters, and local dignitaries braved the cold to celebrate "Topping Out," a major milestone in its construction. This spring, the Library Foundation will begin hard hat tours for current and prospective CommonSpark supporters, offering an exclusive look at the progress of this groundbreaking civic destination. Naming opportunities are still available in the building.

"We are deeply honored and grateful for Senator Joyce Waddell's generous gift in support of new Main Library. Senator Waddell and her family have been a true blessing to our community, and their commitment to education and public service is inspiring," said Charles Thomas, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Board of Trustees chair. "This transformational gift, which supports the construction of new Main and the creation of the Dr. Joyce Davis Waddell Event Space, will leave a lasting legacy—enriching lives and strengthening Charlotte for generations to come."

The new Main Library will be a destination for Mecklenburg County and beyond, a hub of dynamic programming for the Library system, and a beacon for learning in Uptown Charlotte.

The CommonSpark is a comprehensive, \$165 million public-private campaign which serves to ignite change within the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library system. The campaign includes funding for construction of a new Main Library; a new Library Administration Center; technology, innovation and programming throughout the Library system; an endowment for the future and annual operating support.

When you stand on site and experience the scale of it for yourself, you can feel how extraordinary this place will be. To schedule your hard hat tour of new Main Library and learn more about the CommonSpark, contact Jenni Gaisbauer at (704) 416-0801 or jgaisbauer@cmlibrary.org.





IN FY2024...

The Library saw a

27%

increase in our early childhood literacy programming

Empower the next generation of learners. Your donation helps provide access to technology and resources like these young patrons at University City Regional Library.

How to Plug In

The Library provides supportive, resource-full and nurturing environments for the previously unplugged

From the maelstrom that is our daily lives – work, school, kids, parents, weather, and the 24-hour news cycle – we all deserve time to unplug and recharge our batteries. But plugging back in can be equally as challenging. With the prevalence of negative and unproductive information that swarms our devices, finding the right outlet for reentry can be just as important.

There's one place in our community that consistently offers a positively productive and inspiring space for learning, growing, and connection: Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, of course! Each branch offers a hub of activity, a meeting ground for shared interests, and an avenue for meaningful community involvement.

With the Library, you can plug back in with intent: our vast collection of inspiring stories, thrilling escapes and expert advice; a digital library at your fingertips when another errand just isn't in the cards; and resources like America's NewsBank, a comprehensive collection of reliable news sources covering a wide array of topics and issues, to help you curate your own news experience.



Watch out — say her name three times and she might just revoke your library card! (Just kidding!) Mint Hill Library staff embraced the Halloween spirit, with Sheila Moore rocking a Beetlejuice-inspired look.

A Branch for Every Personality

The Library system is set up to be geographically convenient for residents of Mecklenburg County. We are constantly working to expand access (hello, MoLi and MILa!), improve customer experiences, and establish new locations to support our growing community.

Our branches each have their own special “flavor,” reflecting the community it serves. While Plaza Midwood, South County Regional, or West Boulevard Library might be your most convenient stop, consider discovering other branches that match your style, enhance your sense of belonging, and expand your network.

STAFF SPILL THE TEA!

What they said about the one-of-a-kind vibes at their Libraries!

“**Cornelius** has a rich life experience and embraces diverse communities. She thrives in a town that blends small-town charm with city energy, ideally near water. Though traditional on the outside, she radiates warmth and joy. She connects people through stories, art, and culture, always ready to support her community with kindness, inclusivity, and a steady presence.”

“**Steele Creek** is a curious storyteller with a knack for finding fantastical tales — always welcoming children with open arms, ready to spin stories and spark imaginations.”

“If **Allegra Westbrooks Regional** were a person, it’s a friend that you haven’t seen in a while, but still feels like old times when you reconnect. Allegra is wise and welcoming, and maybe a little bit weird. Allegra is eager to share, well-rounded, and enjoys thought-provoking conversations, but also understands the value of silence and reflection.”

“**Independence Regional Library** personifies a wise and well-respected mother figure. She nurtures her visitors by offering answers, great books, and essential knowledge. With clarity about her purpose—engaging patrons—she powerfully unites the community. She confidently offers abundant resources, meaningful programs for everybody, and a welcoming space that we can proudly call ‘my library.’”

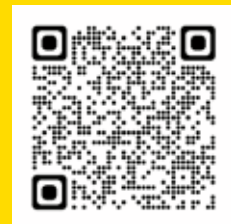
“We describe **Pineville** as a town-centric, quaint, adaptable, flexible, friendly, helpful, courteous, light and bright, energetic and cheerful person.”



LIBRARY GIVING DAY IS APRIL 1

No joke, your gift matters!

With every story read, every class attended, and every skill learned, the Library changes lives. Your gift on Library Giving Day keeps the connection strong.



foundation.cmlibrary.org/donate

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY UNIVERSITY CITY REGIONAL



From left to right: Dimple Ajmera, At-large Representative, City of Charlotte; Charles Thomas, Program Director, Knight Foundation and Board Chair, CM Library; René Perkins Johnson, District 4 Representative, City of Charlotte; Debra Sharp, Branch Manager, University City Regional Library; Marcellus Turner, CEO and Chief Librarian, CM Library; George Dunlap, District 3 County Commissioner; Leslie Johnson, Deputy County Manager; Keith Stanley, President and CEO, University City Partners; Caitlin Moen, Chief Library Services Officer, CM Library; Leigh Altman, At-large County Commissioner and Vice Chair; Susan Rodriguez-McDowell, District 6 County Commissioner; and Laura Meier, District 5 County Commissioner

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library expands reach with new facilities and refueled resources

Cutting Ribbons, Opening Doors

On an unseasonable mild and clear February morning, the new University City Regional Library opened its doors on Waters Edge Village Drive. The inaugural opening was attended by local champions including Charles Thomas, Leslie Johnson, George Dunlap and Keith Stanley as well as Library CEO and chief librarian Marcellus Turner. Charlotte's poet laureate Jay Ward shared a new piece entitled *The Ground is Breaking, We Broke It*, commissioned by the Library to mark this special day.

The 38,000-square-foot facility, representing a \$39.6 million investment, is now the second-largest library in Mecklenburg County, offering 13,500 square feet more than its predecessor. The Library's design by architect Gensler emphasizes accessibility, designed to be welcoming to all and oriented conveniently to public transportation.

Inside, customers can enjoy dedicated spaces for youth programs, study areas, community meetings, and a vibrant pre-teen and teen section. Adding an interactive experience, JE Dunn generously donated an Everbright board in the children's area to foster creativity among our youngest visitors. A life-sized Appaloosa horse sculpture by celebrated North Carolina artist Anne Lemanski entitled *Stella Terra* and given by art patron Fleur Bresler stands at the top of the stairwell and welcomes visitors to the expansive second floor.

Over 60 donors placed books on the shelves during our "Fill the Shelves" campaign, adding new children's and adult titles to the University City collection while recognizing and honoring their loved ones on custom bookplates in return for their gifts.



Our youngest Library visitors can't resist the glow of the Everbright board — thanks to a gift from JE Dunn.

Scan the QR code to see other images from this incredible event including Jay Ward's moving poem captured on video.



foundation.cmlibrary.org/universitycity

Ribbons on the Road

We celebrated Fifth Third Bank's generous two-year commitment to MoLi (Mobile Library) with a ribbon cutting at First Baptist Church West on February 5 showcasing the new vehicle wrap. Library leadership and commissioners spoke about how vital this is to Mecklenburg County residents who lack easy access to books, technology, and community resources.



IN FY2024...

The Library delivered more than 20,000 programs to

475,000

people

From left to right: Leigh Altman, At-large County Commissioner and Vice Chair; Caitlin Moen, Chief Library Services Officer, CM Library; Charles Thomas, Program Director, Knight Foundation and Board Chair, CM Library; Lee Fite, President, Fifth Third Bank Carolinas Region; Arthur Griffin, At-large County Commissioner; and Dr. Ricky Woods, Senior Minister, First Baptist Church – West and Trustee, CM Library



DONOR PROFILE

Hobbs Family Expands Children's Reading Area at Plaza Midwood Library in Memory of Jenner Wood

A young light still shines at the Library

Jenner (right) was born on January 29, 2019, the Wood's first-born son. He loved sharing his books and toys, especially with his best friend Trip Hobbs (left).

In his four short years, Jenner Wood was captivated by the world around him and adored sharing all the new things he learned with his little brother Howell. From songbirds to fire trucks, he was a child that delighted in experiences of all types. His soul was deep, and his curiosity knew no bounds.

The Jenner V Foundation was established in September 2023 by his family in his memory to support causes that reflect his inquisitive spirit and his natural ability to educate.

Dexter Hobbs, a close friend of the Wood family, felt strongly that the gift he and his family made recognized the special, loving child Jenner was.

"Jenner's parents Jenner and Emily, and my wife Laura and I were close friends at UNC-Chapel Hill, and now we are next-door neighbors in Plaza Midwood," shared Dexter, "our oldest children were born the same years, Jenner and Trip then Howell and Clark."

Dexter and Laura's son Trip and Jenner were best friends. Laura and Emily would joke about being "sister moms" because their children were always together.

"The Wood children are the closest children I have behind my own three kids," said Dexter. "I wanted to honor his memory while also supporting the community he is a part of."

With this in mind, the Hobbs Family made a heartfelt gift to Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation to expand the Plaza Midwood Library children's reading area in his memory. The gift will help create an enriching space for young readers at the popular neighborhood Library and ensure that Jenner's love for learning and discovery continues to inspire children for generations to come.

"It's our neighborhood branch that we walk and ride bikes to," said Dexter, "and while there's been a children's area in the branch, it wasn't nearly as engaging as some of the others. It's important to introduce the benefits of a library to children at a young age, even before they can read. An interactive children's area fosters excitement, appreciation, and love for the library."

The creation of a designated children's area will feature interactive learning tools and cozy kid-sized furniture designed to encourage a lifelong love of reading. The Wood family were extremely

honored for this gift to be in Jenner's memory and are excited to visit Jenner's new children's area with Howell and their new son John.

Plaza Midwood Library is under renovations at the time of this publication. We look forward to sharing this new space with the Hobbs and Wood families and hope that it truly reflects the kind, thoughtful and insightful boy Jenner was. Through this gift, the Hobbs family not only honors a dear friend's child but also highlights the power of discovery and literacy to transform lives.

Jenner (left), seen here with Trip, was especially fascinated by dinosaurs, Spiderman, construction sites, and sirens of all sorts. Red firetrucks were his favorite.



Progress marches on

In addition to the ongoing progress of new Main Library and the opening of University City Regional, the Library is working on improvement and expansions in its other locations including:

Myers Park

Through the Capital Reserve process, Myers Park Library received a refresh of new carpet and paint in January.

Plaza Midwood

Plaza Midwood Library is getting much needed improvements to the restrooms, HVAC system, roof, and parking lot plus enhancements to the children's area thanks to the Hobbs family. Although the branch was temporarily closed, the staff connected with the community by hosting weekly Family Storytime programs with Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation and visits from the Mobile Library (MoLi) and Mobile Internet Lab (MILa), both at Veterans Park.

Mountain Island

In early fall, Mountain Island Library will undergo a project to update its roof and lighting system.

Davidson

Thanks to Students Offering Smiles, three new children's sensory wall-mounted toys are being installed at the Davidson Library.

Sugar Creek

Architects Perkins + Will are launching the community engagement phase for the new Sugar Creek Library project. Community feedback will be collected and analyzed to ensure the design reflects local needs and aspirations.

Gifts to Library Foundation help expand and enrich the resources that make our communities thrive. Your support stays local and has a significant impact you can see and experience every day at the Library.

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SAVE THE DATE

Planned Giving Webinar

The Surprising Benefits of Genealogy



**Wednesday, May 14
11:00 am virtual event**

**Presented by
A. Danielle Pritchett, MLS**

*Genealogy Librarian
Robinson Spangler Carolina Room*

Genealogy helps us uncover our past, connect with our roots, and appreciate the legacies of those who came before us. How will your story be remembered? Through estate giving, you can shape your own legacy by supporting the causes that matter most to you. For more information, contact Teleia White at twhite@cmlibrary.org or (704) 416-0803.

A native of Danville, VA, our presenter Danielle Pritchett graduated Summa Cum Laude from North Carolina Central University in 2021 with a Master of Library Science degree specializing in Public Libraries. With over a decade of experience in the library field, Danielle has excelled in various roles within three distinct library systems. However, it was her passion for genealogy that truly ignited her journey into the world of genealogy research in 2012. In her current position at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, she is poised to bring her extensive knowledge and enthusiasm to the diverse communities of the Charlotte area.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation exists to help the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library improve lives and build a stronger community. The Foundation supports Library services, expands the Library's collection of print and digital materials, enhances programming for all ages, invests in innovative initiatives and strives to grow its endowment for future generations.

Photography: Everett Blackmon, Maggie Bean, Dexter Hobbs