

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY  
FOUNDATION

# transformations

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER FOR CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY SUPPORTERS



Photo courtesy: Everett Blackmon

West Boulevard branch

## SPECIAL REPORT

### CommonSpark's final phase gets festive

We are bringing the celebration to your branch — and it's unlike anything we've done before

## DONOR SPOTLIGHTS

### "What inspired you to give to the Library?"

From tangible assets to indefinable sentiment, Library's broad appeal is one of its many benefits

## PLUS...

### Notable News

ARPA funding, new branch construction, partnerships, major gifts, and more

**“It takes two to make a thing go right.  
It takes two to make it outta sight.”**

—Rob Base & DJ EZ Rock



Dear friends,

As you read through our latest newsletter, you'll discover it's full of success stories. Things are going right at the Library because of you.

We're entering our final phase of the CommonSpark campaign and want to thank you for being a part of the remarkable progress we've made. **Together we have raised 85% of our goal and have \$19 million more to raise.**

It takes patience, courage and optimism to invest in this extraordinary project to take our Library from good to great to "outta sight."

You'll be hearing a lot more from us in the next two years as we bring this once-in-a-lifetime campaign to branches, homes, coffee shops, breweries, workplaces and more.

Together we are making history. And it just takes two — you and your Library.

With gratitude,

Marcellus Turner  
CEO and Chief Librarian  
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Jenni Gaisbauer, CFRE  
Executive Director  
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation



**CURE FOR EARWORMS:** Got a tune stuck in your head? Take a listen on freegal music +. It's free with your Library card.



[cmlibrary.freegalmusic.com/  
album/29273036/1](http://cmlibrary.freegalmusic.com/album/29273036/1)

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# The CommonSpark started with a flash.

Fireworks and glowsticks illuminated the ballroom of the Charlotte Convention Center as the first renderings of the new Main Library were unveiled. In a breathtaking sweep of glass and steel, the future of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library was realized in physical form.

Designed by award-winning international architect Snøhetta and informed by local team of experts, community advocates and philanthropists, this awe-inspiring and ambitious project funded by the CommonSpark campaign was launched with its first private gift, \$10 million from the Knight Foundation, and its first public gift, \$65 million from Mecklenburg County, in 2019.

From the start this project has captured a lot of attention and generated interest — and questions — about the role of libraries in the 21st century.



Simply put, the lending libraries and repositories for books and artifacts of Andrew Carnegie's generation have expanded and adapted with the times. While still a core component (no worries, the books aren't going anywhere) these resources are joined with other essentials necessary to support our friends, family, neighbors and ourselves in our journeys to become thriving, knowledgeable citizens.

*"Though printed volumes remain their focal point, the best new libraries offer so much more: computer labs, conference rooms of different sizes, studios for recording podcasts and editing videos; event spaces, hands-on experiences for kids, a café..."*

*"The golden age of public libraries dawns again,"  
The Washington Post, January 1, 2022.*

**Every gift to this landmark campaign matters because this is not just a library. It's your Library.**

*An 8-page newsletter isn't big enough to capture all the things the CommonSpark will ignite in our community. Visit our CommonSpark microsite to learn more about this comprehensive project.*



[foundation.cmlibrary.org/commonspark/](https://foundation.cmlibrary.org/commonspark/)

*Renderings courtesy: Snøhetta*



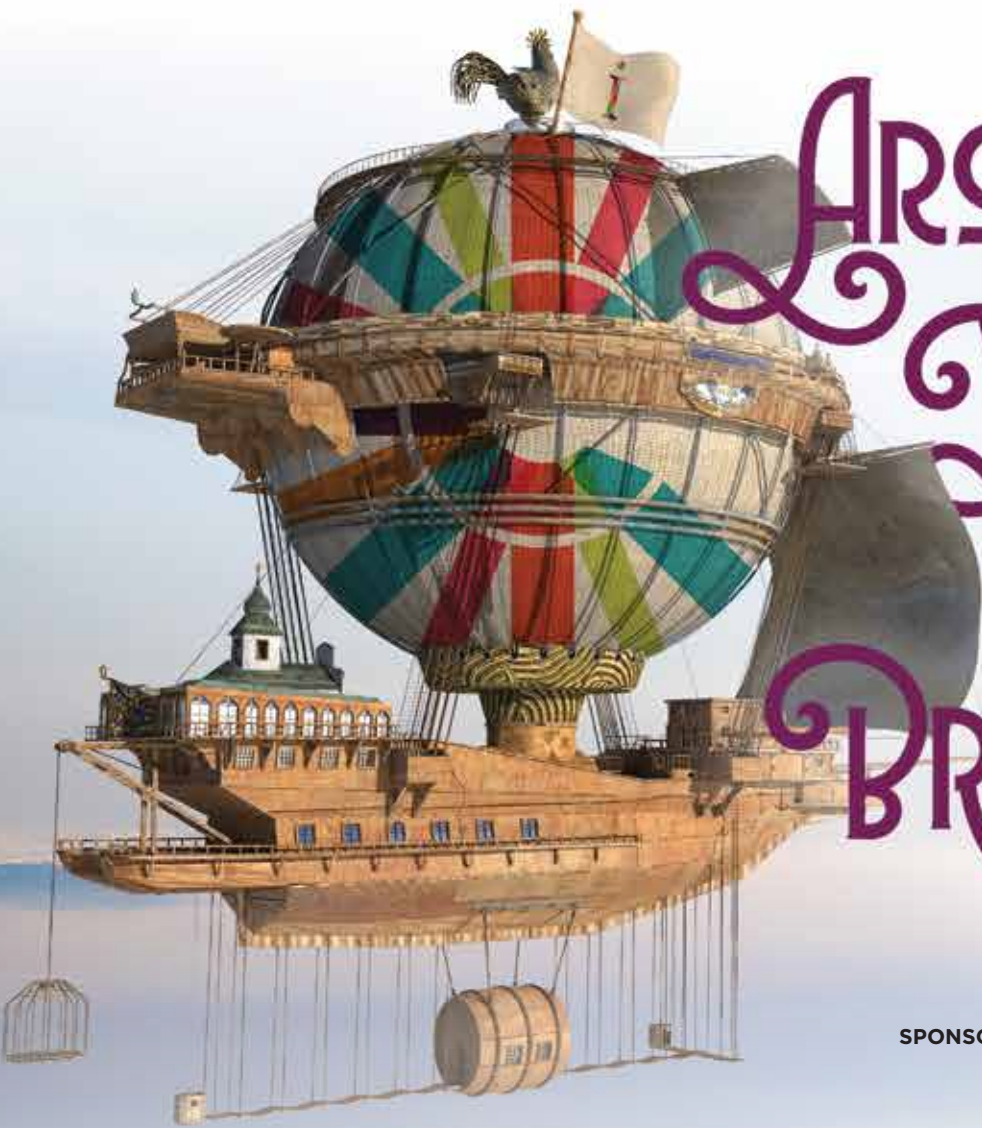
**“The Library is a place for reinvention.**

**And the Main Library is the place where we can do it all together.”**

—Rob Harrington

*Inside the dynamic grand lobby will be a programming forum, popular reading area, immersive theater and café.*





# AROUND THE WORLD IN 21 BRANCHES

SPONSORED BY



## The "World" Tour

From 11 am – 2 pm at...

North County Regional	May 6, 2023
University City Regional	June 17, 2023
Hickory Grove	July 15, 2023
Mint Hill	September 16, 2023
Matthews	October 14, 2023
Independence Regional	December 2, 2023

**Then in 2024...** Sugar Creek, Plaza Midwood, Allegra Westbrooks Regional, ImaginOn, Myers Park, SouthPark Regional, South County Regional, Pineville and Steele Creek. **And in 2025...** South Boulevard, West Boulevard, Mountain Island, Cornelius and Davidson.

*Dates subject to change.*

To learn more about ***Around the World in 21 Branches*** and keep track of our journey visit ***foundation.cmlibrary.org***.



## WHISTLE STOP

**whistle-stop** *noun*  
(h)wi-səl-stāp  
: a small station at which trains stop only on signal  
: a small community

### The Whistle Stop: Off the beaten path of our "World" tour of branches

Whistle Stops are a chance to gather with friends, neighbors and colleagues in a relaxed setting (at home, a coffee shop, brewery, or even work) for an in-depth look at how the CommonSpark amplifies the impact of the Library on our lives and community.

The Library Foundation will help you plan your Whistle Stop — from invitations and catering lists to program materials and guest swag. And of course, we will be on hand at your event as the campaign and content experts.

To learn more, give us a signal at 704.416.0801 to get your Whistle Stop on the map.



# We are circumnavigating Mecklenburg County, touching down at each and every Library location along the way.

Inspired by the Jules Verne's novel and generously sponsored by Lowe's, the Library Foundation is bringing the CommonSpark to your neighborhood branch.

While we're there we'll celebrate what makes your local Library unique — casting a well-deserved spotlight on each location as an authentic reflection and enthusiastic advocate of the community that surrounds it.

Held on a Saturday from 11 am to 2 pm at the festival you can...

Experience your new Main Library through dazzling **Virtual Reality** worlds created especially for our Library patrons

Decode and decipher clever clues on **scavenger hunts** and uncover hidden Library treasures

Meet local, award-winning wordsmiths with intimate **author talks** and book signings

Dig into **DIY projects** featuring Lowe's on-site supplies and instruction in Library MakerSpaces

**Screen print** your own t-shirt, tote bag, poster and more at our Souvenir Workshop

Tap into your inner Picasso (or Bearden) and help **create a mural**, guided by local artists and inspired by community color

Get a chance to chat about all things Library with our CEO Marcellus **'MT'** Turner

Collect stamps and stickers in your passport to **win amazing prizes** from our sponsors including Lowe's

Make your CommonSpark campaign gift and **pose** with a BIG check

Pick up your **free passport** at an **Around the World** festival or at any branch starting **May 6** and discover the infinite value of the Library.



...plus not-to-be-missed discovery stations, photo booths, Insta-spots, food trucks, music, swag and fun giveaways. And meet other Library lovers just like you!

THANK YOU TO



for their **\$500,000 challenge** to all donors on the first leg of the tour.

### **New ARPA funding accelerates and amplifies digital literacy for those who need it most**

Mecklenburg County opened a second window of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, accepting proposals to move the County's COVID-19 Strategic Recovery Plan forward. In that plan, the Library is tasked to "invest more resources in closing the digital divide in our community faster through efforts in place now."

Over the next three years, an investment of **\$2.9 million** will cover multiple strategies to increase the Library's capacity to meet this goal, specifically targeting older adults and ESOL\* learners, and those seeking employment or to upskill for future advancement.

A final goal is to address the connectivity and digital literacy needs of the 20,000 citizens receiving free devices through the MeckTech initiative. Funding will cover Digital Literacy (DigiLit) expansion including supplemental instructors, refreshed programming and an additional Outreach vehicle to expand mobile services. The plan also includes acquiring digital resources and collections to serve high-need populations and providing free Wi-Fi hotspots and Wi-Fi enabled laptops for customer checkout.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library continues to be a leading example for improving digital equity and expanding digital literacy.

### **Nucor joins the CommonSpark Campaign's roster of prominent Charlotte-based corporations**

Nucor Corporation, the largest steel producer in the U.S., made a **\$1 million** investment to The CommonSpark Campaign. One of North America's most sustainable steel companies, Nucor is already meeting the emission benchmarks set by the 2030 Paris Climate Agreement. Their contribution brings the Campaign closer to its \$143 million goal.

"We are so fortunate to live in a city where locally-based corporate partners see the intrinsic value of a healthy Library system," said Holly Welch Stubbing, co-chair for The CommonSpark Campaign, "the Library Foundation and I are so grateful for Nucor's galvanizing contribution to this project."

### **Lowe's builds excitement at the Library**

Around the World in 21 Branches is generously sponsored by Lowe's. The national home improvement retailer is providing **\$250,000** in financial support for the monthly festivals at all Library branches as well as supplies and instruction for on-site DIY classes and products and gift cards for prizes and giveaways. Lowe's knows how to build up community.

### **Philip L. Van Every Foundation energizes spaces for entrepreneurial enterprise**

The Philip L. Van Every Foundation was established to fulfill the legacy of Charlotte businessman, civic leader, and philanthropist, Philip Lance Van Every. Mr. Van Every was the grandson and son of the founders of Lance Packing Company (a Charlotte-based snack-food company), CEO of Lance, Inc., and a successful two-term Charlotte Mayor. A longtime supporter of the Library, the Foundation helped create a business library, the first job-help center in the former Main Library and funded a mobile computer lab to provide digital literacy access to the community. The Foundation's most recent gift of **\$250,000** to the CommonSpark demonstrates their ongoing commitment to our community — a fitting tribute to Mr. Van Every.

### **Branching out in Pineville**

Located at 505 Main Street in the heart of Pineville, the 18,000 square foot community branch is home to a vast collection of print and digital materials. The Library shares the building with Pineville's Town Hall making it a true community space. The branch brings the Library's total locations to 21.

### **University City gets a new home in 2025**

Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners approved **\$39.6 million** for a new University City Regional Library. The funding will allow for the design, construction and acquisition of property and furniture for the 35,000 square-foot two-story building that will include rooms dedicated for youth programs, studying, community programs and meetings; a youth workroom; a pre-teen and teen area; drive-through returns; and services that are currently used at the popular branch.

### **Community partnerships thrive at the Library**

**Teach for America North Carolina** (TFA NC), a national nonprofit dedicated to expanding educational opportunity for children, and the Library announced their partnership to close the region's opportunity gap via strategic collaboration.

While informal partners for years, the Library and TFA NC will now work together to develop a comprehensive, strategic and sustainable partnership that will strengthen educational success for both entities. The partnership will be designed to enhance the professional development and skillset of Library staff and TFA NC staff, corps members and alumni based in Mecklenburg County and surrounding areas. Shared training focusing on the topic of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) will launch this summer.



## DONOR SPOTLIGHTS



**DIGILIT:** Seniors at Prosperity Creek received free hands-on instruction and digital proficiency skills as a part of the Library's outreach efforts.



**IN FOCUS:** Vision To Learn will provide free eye exams to elementary school students in low-income communities this summer at Library locations



**TIME TO CELEBRATE:** University City Regional recognized its 30th anniversary by inviting the community to read, engage and learn on Feb. 14.



**GROWING BRANCHES:** Pineville opened with a ribbon-cutting and media event on Jan. 9.



## A Quiet Life, A Loud Legacy

**SUSAN MAZZELLA**  
1946-2023

The only child of first-generation immigrants, Susan Mazzella, a former Washington, D.C., based paralegal, moved to Charlotte from New York after the death of her parents 15 years ago. She had sold their family home and with the proceeds bought a home in Huntersville, right next door to Grace Gomez.

She and Grace formed a friendship, walking her dog together in the neighborhood and taking trips to New Orleans and Savannah.

"Susan was very kind, beautiful person, but she was also very private and enjoyed her solitude," Grace shared. "Along with her love of animals, Susan felt most at home in a library and loved the upgrades at the North County branch."

On her death at 76 this past November, Susan's will stipulated that her investment accounts be evenly divided between three causes close to her heart — animal welfare, veteran services, and the place she considered a second home, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

In one of the bravest acts of paying it forward, legacy giving brings to light its benefactor's unwavering faith in the future. Susan may have chosen a quiet life, but her legacy gift reveals how much she valued kindness and compassion.

An investment in the Library Foundation as part of your estate plan allows you to support what you love long into the future. Make a lasting impact through a retirement account, will, insurance policy or other avenues.

**Need some guidance?** We'd love to help. Please contact Karen Beach at 704.416.0802 or [kbeach@cmlibrary.org](mailto:kbeach@cmlibrary.org) to connect one-on-one to discuss your plans.

We are hosting a program on April 4 from 12 - 1 pm with *New York Times* obituary writer and author Gavin Edwards called **"Write Your Own Legacy."**

Visit our website at [foundation.cmlibrary.org](http://foundation.cmlibrary.org) for details.

# FOUNDATION

foundation.cmlibrary.org  
704.416.0803

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## DONOR SPOTLIGHT



### The Levine- Sklut Family Foundation

Lori and Eric Sklut recently made a generous **\$500,000** contribution to the CommonSpark campaign. We asked them a few questions about what inspired their gift to the Library.

#### Why are public spaces important to our community?

*"Our Foundation measures metrics for organizations we support. When we chose to fund the naming of the Common Reading area [in the new Main Library] it was due in part to the high usage expected and number of people engaged, its easy access from the main floor and the plan to have current publications on display."*

#### What motivates your generosity?

*"We are motivated by previous philanthropists who made Charlotte a special place to live when we were growing up. Now, it is our turn to help make Charlotte a better place for the next generation."*

#### Libraries today are so much more than repositories for books. What aspects of the new Main Library excite you?

*"It took us a while to understand the meaning of libraries today. What attracted us most to the new Main Library was the multi-purpose use of the modern architectural building, holding not only books, but social services and meeting spaces. It will be the crown jewel in terms of architecture in Charlotte which also excited us."*

**A CROWN JEWEL:** *The design plans of new Main Library have been finalized, and the decommissioned building will be razed in June 2023. In its place will be an architecturally distinctive, state-of-the-art, technologically-advanced knowledge center.*

*Rendering courtesy: Snohetta*

SAVE THE DATE  
THURSDAY, NOV. 2, 2023

# VERSE & VINO

PRESENTING SPONSOR



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.