

La Selva

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reopens

library

Beachfront community
contributes volunteer
hours and \$27,000

BY TERRI MORGAN
Special to the Mercury News

The close-knit La Selva Beach community, which raised \$27,000 to help improve its local library, celebrated the reopening of the expanded branch Friday with an open house.

The tiny branch of the Santa Cruz City-County Library system reopened earlier this month following a 2½-month expansion project that added 6,000 square feet to the building, increasing it to 22,000 square feet. The renovation allowed librarians to move the children's book section from a small cramped corner into a newly built room.

'Room to move'

"It's a big improvement," said Susan Elgin, assistant director of the library system. "It gives people room to move. When we do the children's story hour now we don't have to move the paperback racks to make room for the children."

The building is now fully accessible for people with disabilities, she added.

The community on the county's southern coast lobbied for the expansion and helped with the renovation, Elgin said. Local architect Dave Boone donated the plans and served as the construction supervisor for the job. Other volunteers packed, moved, unpacked and re-shelved books and helped get the library ready for the reopening.

5-year-old contributes \$5

The community outgrew the branch about five years ago and began petitioning for a bigger building. The county agreed to provide \$75,000 in redevelopment funds for the expansion and required the community to contribute \$25,000. The La Selva Beach Improvement Association raised about \$27,000 through fund-raisers and individual donations ranging from a \$5 contribution from a 5-year-old to a \$3,000 gift from a longtime resident.

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Friends of the Library contributed in the fund-raising and bought new bookshelves.

"That's the kind of thing this community does," said Dot Allen, the branch manager and only paid staff member.

The La Selva Beach branch has been a community-driven library from its inception. Community members petitioned the Santa Cruz City-County Library system to open a branch in their beachfront town in 1950. Their wishes were granted a few years later when a trial branch was opened in the La Selva Beach Community Hall. The makeshift branch proved so popular that the La Selva Beach recreation district agreed to build a permanent home for the library on Estrella Avenue in 1967. The building was completed a year later and run by the city and county library sys-

tem, which rents the building from the recreation district.

The branch was threatened with closure in the late '70s after Proposition 13 passed and funding for the library system was slashed. The community rallied together once again, establishing a network of volunteers to keep the doors of the library open under the direction of library staff. In 1988 the library system was able to put Allen on the payroll. She is assisted by a core of regular volunteers who help check out and shelve books, perform clerical duties and run the weekly children's story hour program.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

The La Selva Beach library is located at 316 Estrella Ave. It is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Fridays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Children's story hour begins at 10 a.m. Wednesdays.