

La Selva Beach community takes its library to heart

By KATHY KREIGER
Sentinel staff writer

LA SELVA BEACH — Chase Fraser's \$3 contribution may not have been the largest of the donations to add a children's room to his library, but in some ways it was the most generous.

When the 7-year-old boy learned last year that the La Selva Beach Branch Library needed money to expand, he gave the library everything he had: three dollars.

"He wanted to help," said his mother Denice Fraser. "He got his piggybank out and that's all he had."

Other community members didn't go quite that far, but the town's fund-raising efforts showed how much they cherish the little red-and-white library behind the fire station.

In November 1990, the county pledged \$75,000 at 2nd District Supervisor Robley Levy's request to help the library add another 750 square feet to its 1,200-square-foot library, but it was up to the town to come up with another \$25,000.

Raising that money has been a down-home affair.

The town's recreation district donated the proceeds of its yearly art sale and the Men's Club held a golf tournament. A hugely successful St. Patrick's Day dinner and raffle raised nearly \$4,000, and the Actors Theater put on a benefit play. With other community groups pitching in, residents have already raised more than their goal, and construction could start as soon as summer.

The largest individual donation came from resident Jim Fairbanks.

"No, it's not generous," Fairbanks said. "I've lived here on and off since 1927. This community

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— Librarian Dot Allen

has backed me in so many ways. It's my turn to pay them back."

Since the Women's Club started it in 1950 with 300 donated books and a small rented room, the library in this little seaside town has been a community center for the people who live here.

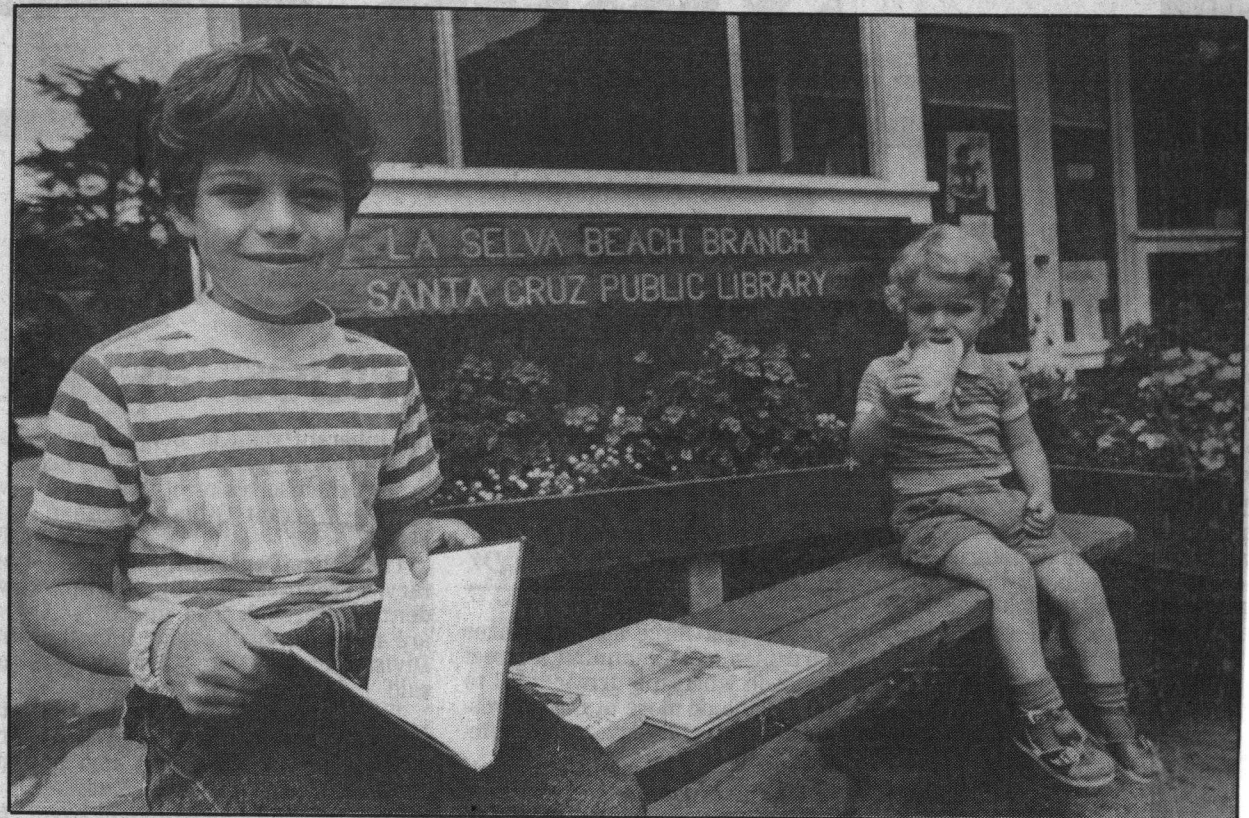
"It's our second home," said Denice Fraser, who teaches her son at home. When he has a question, she writes it down and they later ask the librarian.

Although the library is tiny, it has access to the entire 250,000 books in the city-county library system.

At the same time, the librarian and the volunteers know their patrons' reading habits and regularly put books aside for them.

Retirees, mothers with toddlers, and school children who need maps of Virginia, or want to know where President Bush was born — all find their way to the library.

"Everyone comes here," said librarian Dot Allen, who's been at the library for 12 years, first as a volunteer, now as the lone paid staffer, working 20 hours a week. "... La Selva Beach doesn't have a coffee shop. People come here to visit."



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Chase Fraser consumes a book or two while his brother Max chews on something else.