

# Ben Lomond library stays open when others shut down

Press-Banner

The mystery section of the Ben Lomond Community Library is the most heavily trafficked by valley residents looking for a good read.

"People in this town love mysteries," volunteer librarian Carol McQuillin states.

It's no wonder — the history of the valley is rich with shady characters, spooky stories and famous visitors.

A montage at the library by local writer and artist Wendy Buckleman displays the faces of people who have history in the valley — spanning from Shirley Temple to Teddy Roosevelt and Joanna "Asha" Veil.

What is not a mystery is that the Ben Lomond Library is the only library open Fridays in the San

Lorenzo Valley or Scotts Valley.

After a recent budget cuts forced the public library system to shut its doors on Fridays, The Porter Memorial Public Library in Soquel and the Ben Lomond branch are the only libraries in the county with open doors on the last day of the work week.

## At a glance

- **WHAT:** Ben Lomond Community Library
- **WHEN:** 1:30 to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday; 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday
- **WHERE:** 9525 Mill St., in Ben Lomond



Lucjan Szewczyk/Press-Banner

**STILL OPEN:** Volunteer storyteller Debbie Bernick reads a book about dinosaurs to kids at the Ben Lomond Community Library. Because of its low overhead costs and volunteer staffers, the public library is the only one in the valley that remains open on Fridays.

Each library is staffed by volunteers and stay open for cheap. The Ben Lomond branch's annual budget is about \$2,500 and is completely funded by private donors, annual membership fees and nonprofit groups.

Santa Cruz County is responsible for the care of the library, including electricity, water, gas and anything that breaks. McQuillin said county maintenance crews do any work that the library needs done.

"They love the library, and they take

care of us," McQuillin said.

However, books and supplies come out of the library's budget.

The number of books on the shelf has increased from 4,500 volumes in 1987 to about 15,000 today, McQuillin estimates. But she is looking to downsize from three sets of reference encyclopedias to one to make room for other new books.

"We do have a really fine collection of books," McQuillin said. "We have one of the finest science-fiction collections there are."

The Ben Lomond branch was a public

library until 1979, when funds dried up in the aftermath of Proposition 13, which significantly cut property taxes in California.

Retired branch librarian Edith Fikes and San Lorenzo Valley historian Faye Ellis got together in 1980 and generated support, including a \$4,000 federal grant, to open the all-volunteer library.

McQuillin, who has worked as a volunteer librarian on Wednesdays since 1980, said the library relies on book donations to keep the shelves stocked with the latest reads.

"We just ask, no moldy oldies," McQuillin said.

Locals may also drop off bags of magazines, which are free for patrons to pick up and keep.

There is a popular children's story hour from 10 to 11 a.m. Tuesdays, and the library has a single computer connected to the Internet for public use. The library also has an extensive historical section with many newspaper clippings that detail the history of the valley.

But what sets it apart is the friendly volunteers who man the front desk six days a week.

The current crop of librarians are Elaine Campbell, June Pierce, Elaine Hander, Richard Anderson, John Wirth, Mary Stabler, Michelle Estrin-Gelblum, Bill Minkner, Rebecca Demma, Debbie Bernick, Jean McCarthy, Dave Jennings, Joni Bella and McQuillin.

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