

Planning
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New library honors local activist

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WATSONVILLE — Florence Wyckoff will be honored today for her indefatigable efforts to open a new Freedom library. The grand opening of the Florence Wyckoff Freedom Branch Library celebrates her accomplishments and the important addition of the facility to area residents.

"They fooled me completely," Wyckoff said regarding being honored with the dedication of the library in her name. Her reaction was noted in the book "What a Life," written by Ruth Hunter last year.

Now in her 94th year, Wyckoff's tireless work paid off after the old Freedom Library closed due to Proposition 13.

Accomplishing more than many half her age, Wyckoff was previously named by the Watsonville YWCA as one of the Racial Justice Heroes, awarded for decades of work to improve living conditions of migrant workers.

She served on the Advisory



Register-Pajaronian file photo

Florence Wyckoff in 1953.

Committee on Children and Youth after being appointed by Governor Earl Warren in 1949. Also appointed to the California State Board of Public Health, Wyckoff became

concerned about migrant infants and children not receiving proper healthcare. Successfully lobbying for the Migrant Health Act of 1960, Wyckoff helped to implement legislation establishing clinics near all agricultural sites.

Turning to Wyckoff for guidance, Monterey Bay area businessmen and professionals appointed her Chair of the Migration and Adaptation into the Americas to help provide opportunity, counseling and financial aid to high school sophomores applying to

prestigious colleges.

"She's as sharp as a tack and very lively," said Pajaro Valley Unified School District trustee Rodney Brooks, who recently met Wyckoff. "She told me, 'I like angry people. Not hateful people, but angry people.' (She was) alluding to the fact that these are the people who bring about change."

University of California Santa Cruz went so far as to create an oral history document titled "Florence Richardson Wyckoff: Fifty Years of Grassroots Social Activism" through the university's Regional History Project of the University Library. The project demonstrates her remarkable, lifelong

work as a social activist.

Designed by architects Noll and Tam of Berkeley, the former Freedom Fire Station building was transformed into the Freedom Branch Library with new interior finishes, carpeting, lighting, book shelves, computers and specialized furniture.

Local painter Heidi Gottfried and artist James Carl Aschbacher have featured works displayed on the Donor Wall surrounded by extensive landscaping.

Located at 2021 Freedom Blvd., Freedom Library hours are Tuesday 1 to 8 p.m.; Wednesday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursday 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday noon to 4 p.m.