From Concept to Reality: Library Makerspace is Taking Shape

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Join Us in Welcoming Our New Board Members

The Foundation added six amazing women to the board of directors this year: Diana James-Cairns, Gina Meyers, Michelle Rick, Maria Sanchez, Shwetha Shankar, and Megan Wong. We are excited to welcome this group and their unique talents! See our website for complete list of board members.

We are always looking for passionate, civic-minded people who value teamwork and care deeply about our city, our community, and our libraries. This important group does everything from strategic planning to event planning. If you are looking for a way to make a difference, join the Redwood City Library Foundation Board and learn how you can help cultivate literacy, life-long learning and community connections. Send us a message at www.rclfdn.org/volunteer.

Meet Our New Board President: Debbi Jones-Thomas

Debbi grew up in rural Kentucky, the youngest of 13 and the first in her family to go to college. After graduating from Morehead State University, she got her Master’s degree in Educational Psychology and Counseling from the University of Kentucky, Louisville. She then taught high school and worked as a research analyst for the University of Kentucky Education Foundation. In 1978 Debbi became Housing Coordinator for Redwood City, finding room and board for low-income and special-needs citizens. She held that position for more than 33 years. Debbi utilized mentoring resources in the Police Activities League (PAL) and Project READ at the Redwood City Library to provide her son with educational enhancement and social life skills through the difficult middle school years. He is now over 30 and living in Lexington, Kentucky, where he is a musician and community activist and works for the local NPR affiliate WUKY.

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Although she retired in 2010, Debbi is still very active in Redwood City. In addition to the RCLF board, she is on the board of the Kainos Home and Training Center and is executive secretary on the PAL board. In her spare time, Debbi likes to read, cook, garden, and raise house plants. We are lucky to have her as our new board president.

Debbi’s thoughts about being president of the Library Foundation:

“...One of my favorite things about libraries is reading—the foundation of almost everything we do. During the pandemic when libraries were closed, many of us read books from the little libraries in our neighborhood that were filled with children’s and adult books alike. It allowed us to escape and be entertained, and fed our curiosity to continue learning despite being locked down for months. This is one of the many reasons why I continue to support the Redwood City Library Foundation. I also want the opportunities my son accessed to be available to other students as they too learn to conquer the endless possibilities in life. The RCLF exists because of you and your generous contributions to enhance and enrich Redwood City’s wonderful library system. Thank you for your ongoing partnership which makes it possible to fund special programs and projects to serve our entire community. Stay tuned for the next innovative efforts that will provide even more resources!”

Top 5 Benefits of a Makerspace:

1. Provides the opportunity to innovate
2. Creates real-world applications for classroom concepts
3. Teaches resilience & learning to take failure in stride
4. Exposes new audiences to maker opportunities
5. Helps build critical thinking & problem-solving skills

Community Enthusiastic about New Makerspace

We asked Windy Orviss, a teacher at Connect Community Charter School in Redwood City, and Ian Spiro, a local father and tinkerer who works at Google, to tell us about what they are looking forward to with the Makerspace opening, and how they foresee the Redwood City community making the most of this new library resource.

Windy is looking forward to introducing the Makerspace to her students, who are primarily from low-income families. “At school, I focus on project-based learning, where the kids do various creative projects to acquire deeper knowledge and learn how to collaborate with each other. I have a makeshift fab lab, which is just a closet full of stuff accumulated over the years. I’m excited about the kids being able to use the Makerspace with state-of-the-art equipment and I hope it motivates them to explore further and solve challenges.”

Ian is keen on seeing the space as a creative outlet for members of the community. “It’s satisfying to use maker tools to create solutions for the little problems in your life, for example, an organizer tray for a game with many small pieces. It’s fun to make utterly bespoke things for your friends and family.”

Windy, as a Girl Scout leader, intends to show her troop around the new Makerspace to help them earn their STEM badges. “I’m looking forward to bringing the kids here on a field trip. What a great way to engage younger students and open their eyes to future careers they may not even be thinking about!”

Ian and Windy both have great ideas to help our community get started with using the Library Makerspace. Ian says “I’d like to see some easy, customizable starter projects to help people succeed. How about laser cut thermometers to test our superlative climate?” Windy would love to see classes, like robotics, sewing or 3D printing, available to the community. “The library can introduce skills and access to equipment and tools that many parents in the community could not otherwise afford.”

Many thanks to all the members of our Makerspace Community Advisory Group for helping to promote & fundraise for this project!
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