

CheckItOut!

Winter 2011



I geek the future

The library can help everyone explore the things they geek. Get your geek on. Show your support.

geekthelibrary.org

Brought to you by OCLC, a nonprofit library cooperative, with funding by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

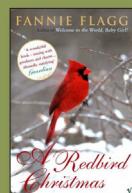
Newsletter of the Solano County Library, serving the cities of Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun, Vacaville, and Vallejo



Authors
Touched
by Literacy
Students'
Letters



Promises Made
LIVE!
One-to-One, On-Demand
Homework Help



*Warm Reads
for Cold Nights*



One year it was trombones, another year it was fortune cookies. For the past 12 years, every January, Solano County Library has hosted celebrations to recognize the revolution in library service made possible by an 1/8th-of-a-penny sales tax passed in 1998.

The Promise

Like many libraries in the state, by 1998 Solano had been on a downward financial spiral for a number of years. Shelves were bare, buildings were deteriorating and branches were closed many mornings and every Friday. Only two were open on Sundays. "We were facing the very real possibility of closing branches and cutting hours even further," explains Bonnie Katz, Director of Library Services.

To remedy the alarming decline of the libraries in Solano County, a sales tax, in the amount of 1/8th-of-a-penny, devoted exclusively to libraries was proposed. Solano County voters stepped forward and showed how much they supported their libraries by approving the measure by an overwhelming majority of 68%. In return, Solano County Library leaders promised, and delivered, more books and materials, more hours, more services for children.

Number of patron visits from the past year



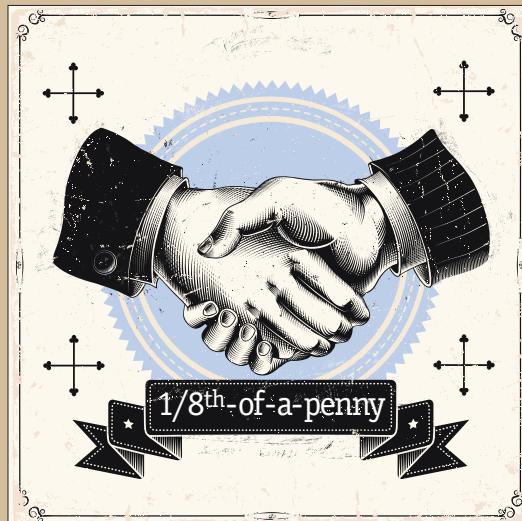
2,042,000

Number of public access Internet terminal uses during past year



731,000

Promises Made



Promises Kept

Promises Hold Even in Tough Times

To keep those promises, even as revenues decline, Solano County Library has relied on reserves put aside during the good years and reorganized its service model to make the most of technology. A website for smartphones, a free one-to-one online tutoring service, a centralized call and email center, and a 24/7 web based "virtual branch" are examples of how the investment in technology has allowed the Library to improve service, even as staffing levels decrease.

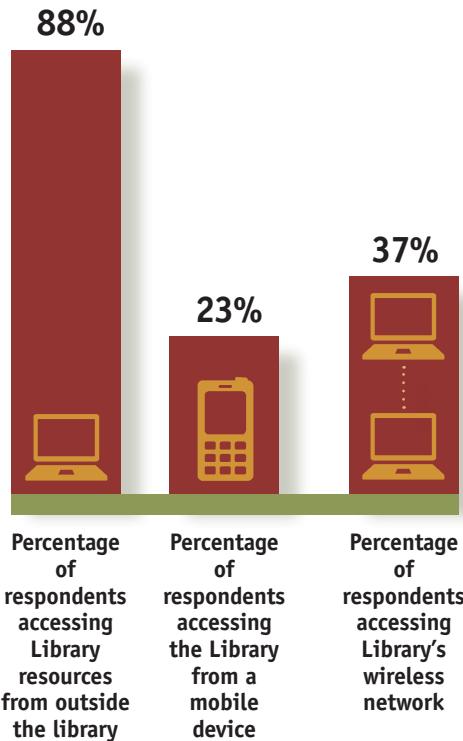
Hours at Solano County Library branches have more than doubled what they were before

the 1/8th-of-a-penny sales tax, from 204 hours per week in 1998 to 448 hours per week today. Purchases of books, magazines, best sellers, recorded books, DVDs and music have increased from \$432,000 in 1998 to \$1,026,000 this past year.

A Promise for the Future

A measure to extend the existing funding will be on the June 5, 2012 ballot. It is not a new tax, it merely continues the dedicated revenue to Solano libraries.

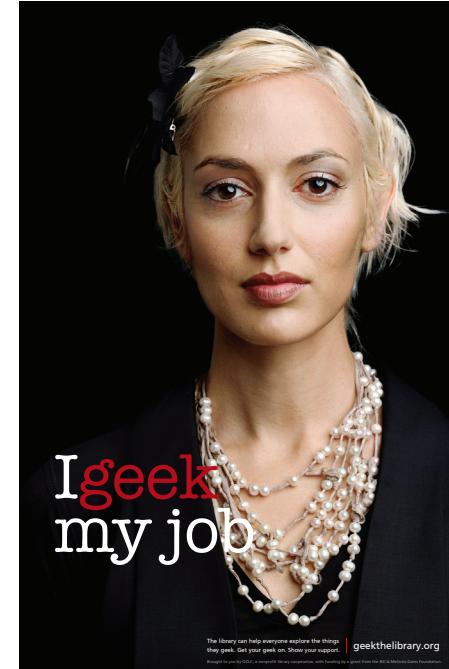
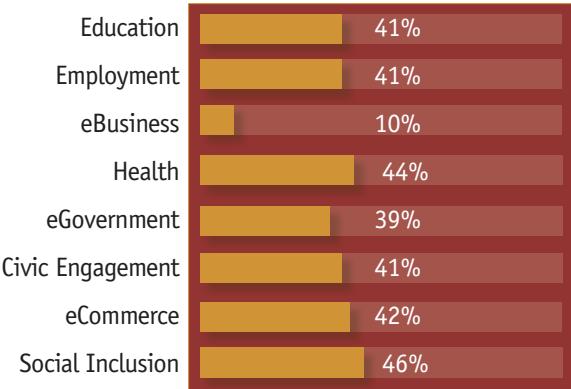
An online survey prepared for Solano County Library by the University of Washington Information School and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation found that library users are wired and mobile. They use the library for business and civic engagement as well as for books, education and other traditional services.



More people than ever are using their Solano County Library in person, online and through their mobile devices. Last year there were over 2 million visits to the branches of Solano County Library and a quarter of a million sessions on public computers. "In tough times, that 1/8th-of-a-

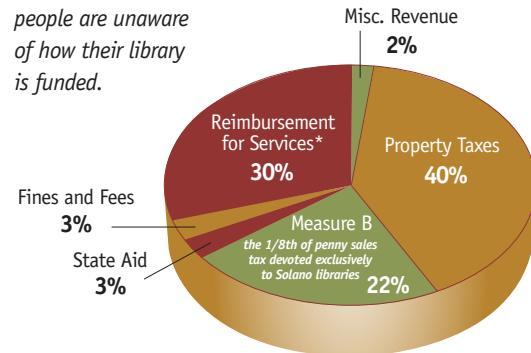
penny returns huge dividends – libraries have become job search centers, small business incubators, and tutoring hubs in the community. With the help of librarians, Solano residents find new opportunities, reeducate themselves, and realize their dreams – every day," said Katz.

Public Computer Use of Respondents by Area



Funding Sources for Solano County Library

Studies show that most people are unaware of how their library is funded.

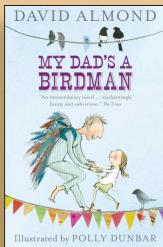


*from Vacaville Library District, Law Library Board of Trustees, and Solano, Napa, and Partners (SNAP)

Warm Reads for Cold Nights

Winter is here. Days are short, nights are cold and long and as people have always done, we seek out light and warmth. Where better to find them than in a really good book?

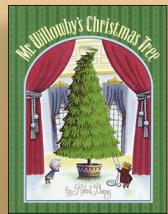
Here's an odd pile of books that are like the best dark sipping chocolate — warm, strong, nourishing and just sweet enough.



My Dad's a Birdman
by David Almond

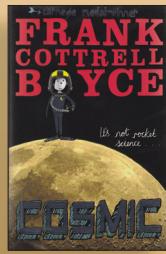
Lizzie's Dad is behaving strangely. He's eating worms, making himself a pair of wings and training to fly in The Great Human Bird Competition. What can she do but join him?

"It doesn't matter if we fly or if we fall. We've got each other" as she says in this unusual story of wings, faith and love.



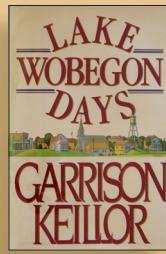
Mr Willowby's Christmas Tree
by Robert Barry

A rich man's towering Christmas tree is too tall for his parlor. He chops off the top and gives it to the maid. It's too tall for her table so she chops off the top, which becomes the gardener's tree, and so on until even the mouse family has a tree to dance around. Share this with the kids and they'll remember it forever.



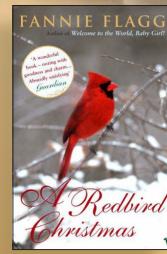
Cosmic
by Frank Cottrell Boyce

Liam is a big lad. Big enough at 12 to pass for 30 and finagle his way into space as the adult chaperone of a rocketful of children. As usual for Boyce, the premise is preposterous, but the execution so deft that you don't care. Enjoy the ride. You'll laugh a lot, think a bit and be grateful for the awesomeness of space, friendship, and Dadliness. Oh, and gravity. Gravity's important too.



Lake Wobegon Days
by Garrison Keillor

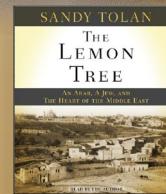
Anybody who thinks great humor must have an element of cruelty should read these stories based on the author's small home town. The characters in these gentle but unsentimental vignettes can make you howl with affectionate laughter. Wherever you come from, you know these people.



A Redbird Christmas
by Fannie Flagg

Oswald has few friends, no family, little to live for and a disease his doctor predicts will kill him before Christmas if he stays in Chicago. He moves to tiny Lost River, AL to prolong his life a few months and spend his last year. Despite himself he gets involved with the townspeople through a little lame redbird. So, is there a surprise happy ending?

Of course!



The Lemon Tree:
An Arab, A Jew and the Heart of the Middle East

by Sandy Tolan

Twenty years after Palestinians had been ousted from al-Ramla, Basher returned, found his childhood home and knocked at the door. Dalia, who had lived there since infancy when her family fled Europe, opened. There began a friendship spanning four decades.

Lemon Tree is both a primer on the Palestinian-Israeli situation and a moving personal story of two families loving one another in the midst of the seemingly irresolvable conflict between their peoples.



by Nancy Vitavec
Librarian, Vacaville Public Library - Cultural Center



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Authors Touched by Literacy Students' Letters

Even in the age of emails, texts, tweets, and Facebook messages, nothing is better than getting a personal, handwritten letter. This year Adult Literacy Program students got something even better. They wrote letters to authors, and the authors actually wrote back! Learners were ecstatic to receive personal letters from the likes of Carol Burnett (comedian and author of *One More Time*), Isabelle Allende (author of *Paula*), Sandra Cisneros (author of *The House on Mango Street*), and Rhonda Byrne (author of *The Secret*).

This past year the Solano County Library Adult Literacy Program invited adult learners to participate in a program called the Writer to Writer Challenge. The challenge consisted of reading a book, then writing a letter to the author. Twenty-two adult learners accepted the challenge. With the help of their tutors, they read a book and crafted a letter to the author.

The authors were touched by the efforts of the adult students. "We didn't know what to expect, but slowly we began getting responses back from the authors. Some of the letters were on beautiful, personalized stationery... every letter was encouraging and supportive," says Joanne Wright, Literacy Program Manager. One author, Marjorie Haines (author of *Rosa*) was so touched that she framed her letter and made arrangements for a phone call with the student who wrote to her.

For many of the students who entered the Writer to Writer Challenge, reading a book or writing a letter was something they had never done before. With the help of volunteer tutors, adults are able to improve their reading, writing, and speaking skills. For information about the Library's literacy program and how to become a tutor, go to solanolibrary.com/programs/literacy or call (707) 784-1526.

by David Lewis, Literacy Sr. Program Assistant



Oct. 2011

Dear Varonica,

For some reason your letter of July 26 just arrived in my office. Please forgive me for the delay in replying. Thank you for reading "Paula" with an open heart and for writing to me. Congratulations for your excellent writing skills!

Isabel Allende

Dear Varonica,

For some reason your letter of July 26 just arrived in my office. Please forgive me for the delay in replying. Thank you for reading "Paula" with an open heart and for writing to me. Congratulations for your excellent writing skills!

Isabel Allende

SANDRA CISNEROS

F. 4. 11

Dear Felix,

Your letter lifted my spirits today. Thank you for reminding me why I write. Mil gracias.

Sandra Cisneros

September 18th, 2011

Maribel
c/o Solano County Library,
1150 Kentucky Street,
Fairfield, CA 94533

Dear Maribel,

Thank you for your letter, and for sharing the impact that *The Secret* has had on you. You must certainly accomplished everything you achieved from your positive thoughts and belief that you could do it. And Maribel, there's no time to how much you can be, and do, and have. All you have to do is keep a vigil on your thoughts and feelings, and do your best to make sure that as many of them are positive, and focused on what you want. To know what you want in the first place is imperative, because you are directing the law by doing that.

Every day, without exception, I spend time in the morning making an intention that I will only see the good in everything today, and that my thoughts and words are becoming more and more positive. We change our life, one thought at a time, and it's so easy to think one positive good thought!

May your life keep getting better and better.

Rhonda Byrne

The Secret



The library can help everyone explore the things they love. geekthelibrary.org

Library Partners to Reduce Dropout Rates by Narrowing Digital Divide

The Solano County Library Foundation's Solano County Literacy in Education Partnership (LEARN) celebrated its public launch October 21 with dozens of local civic and business leaders. The goal of LEARN is to assist Solano County in significantly reducing school dropout rates and to improve workforce opportunities for adults by providing online tutoring and training. "For the Library, this partnership is the beginning of a new network of outreach opportunities; the Library is positioned to be at the heart of the solution to significant problems that Solano County students face," said Library Director Bonnie Katz.

Attendees at the event included Congressman John Garamendi, State Senator Lois Wolk, Vacaville Councilwoman



Christina Arrostuto, First Five Solano; Montoya Graham, Vacaville Boys and Girls Club; Bonnie Katz, Solano County Library; Sandy Person, Solano Economic Development Corporation; Kathleen Marianno, Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District; Ken Maxey, Comcast; Dilenna Harris, Solano County Library Foundation; Don du Bain, Solano County District Attorney; Dan Broadwater, IBEW Local 180; Lois Wolk, California State Senator; Jay Speck, Solano County Superintendent of Schools and David Isom, Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District.

and Solano County Library Foundation Director Dilenna Harris, Solano County District Attorney Don DuBain, Solano County Superintendent of Schools Jay Speck, Solano Economic Development Corporation President Sandy Person, business leader Larry Asera, and labor representative Dan Broadwater. The LEARN program will help narrow the digital divide and extend opportunity to thousands of residents of Solano County by providing access to a number of online resources. Online tutoring services will be available for students, as

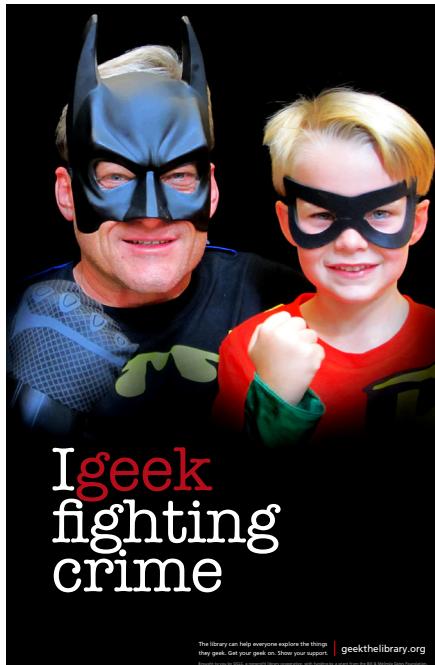
will technical training and job assistance for adults. "The Internet is an amazing tool to learn, to develop new skills, and to stay competitive in our global economy. Indeed, computer literacy is increasingly a requirement for most jobs in America," Congressman Garamendi said. "We need to do all we can to narrow the digital divide. There is no better time than now for Solano County to offer tutoring and job assistance online, and I want to thank the Solano County Library Foundation and their partners for their leadership in making this dream a reality."

The partnership has a three prong approach. Solano County Library will provide free online tutors and job assistance through two services available from its website, Live Home-

work Help and Live Career Help. After-school homework programs such as those at the Boys and Girls Clubs in Vacaville and Vallejo, Vallejo's Fighting Back Partnership, and the P.A.L. program in Vacaville will work with librarians to expose their students to the breadth of educational resources offered by the Library.

Comcast's Internet Essentials will offer low-income families an Internet connection for \$9.95 a month and computers for \$150.

"I was impressed with the diversity of key community stakeholders who participated in the event," said Sandy Person. "We've got to start taking steps to address the issues much sooner if we are serious about making an impact on illiteracy."

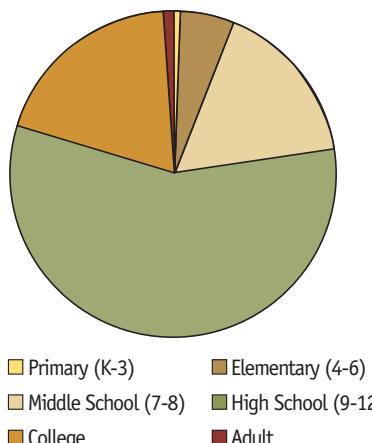


One-to-One, On-Demand Homework Help

Since 2005 Solano County Library has offered library card holders access to thousands of qualified academic and career tutors through its online services Live Homework Help and Live Career Help. Over the past 6 years, Solano students and job seekers have completed more than 47,000 one-to-one tutoring and career sessions online through the Library's website. Both services are accessible from home, school or within a public library. Using award-winning one-to-one online tutoring and 24/7 educational and job search resources the services increase student success rates and assist with workforce development.

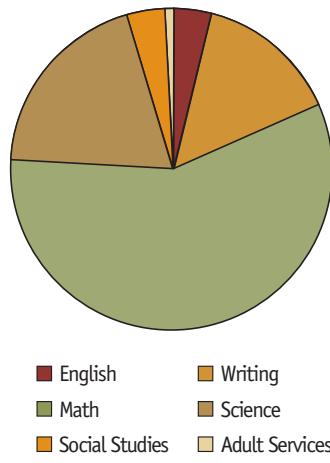
Live Homework Help and Live Career Help are a subscription service provided by Tutor.com, with over 2,500 professional, background-checked tutors.

Sessions by Grade Levels



For children in grades K-12, Live Homework Help offers help with homework, skills building and test preparation. The College Center provides support with basic and advanced math and science as well as a full range of other academic disciplines. The Adult Education and Career Center provides one-to-one guidance and resources to assist in meeting the challenges of conducting a job search, returning to school or preparing for the GED.

Usage by Core Subject



ACCESS

Library public computer, home computer, or personal mobile device

HOURS

1:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. every day

ASSISTANCE

Professional tutors help with academic questions

SESSIONS

Over 47,000 one-to-one tutoring sessions

K-COLLEGE

Math, science, English, social studies, and writing

ADULT

Job search, resume writing, interview prep, GED prep, and more

EN ESPAÑOL

Tutoring available for Spanish speakers

"I love tutor.com

it ROCKS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

- 6th grade Solano County student

"I can't even begin to explain how happy I am that Solano offers this service! It's nice knowing that when I don't understand something I can just log on here and get live help! Thanks!"

- 12th grade Solano County student

"I'm so lucky Solano Library has this and that it's free because I can't afford to go to a tutor everytime I need help. It's very convenient."

- 11th grade Solano County student

"Brian was great!"

This service is saving my grade in Physics."

- 12th grade Solano County student

"It's my first time using this site. I had a big issue with this geometry problem and my sister suggested that I use this online tutoring.

I wasn't able to understand my 8th grade geometry teacher, so I went to this tutor online that helped me.

I'm thankful that someone is actually online, live like 24/7, because it's really helpful for me and others that are having trouble in school. I personally love the white board writing because the teacher and the student can be both working on the situation. If I ever have trouble with school, I can always rely on this site for help and I also have to thank Solano Library for having this site on their page.

Thank you very much!!!!"

- 8th grade Solano County student



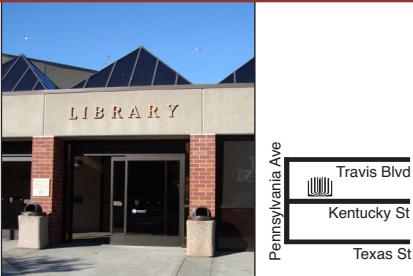
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SUISUN CITY LIBRARY

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RIO VISTA LIBRARY

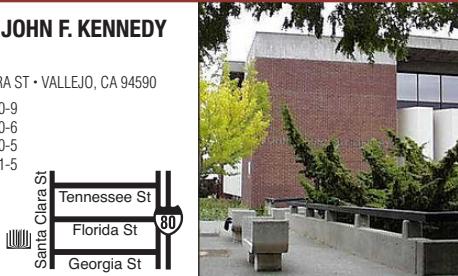
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VALLEJO-SPRINGS-TOWNE LIBRARY

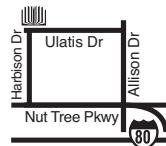
1003 OAKWOOD AVE VALLEJO, CA 94591

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FRI & SAT: 10-5
SUN: CLOSED

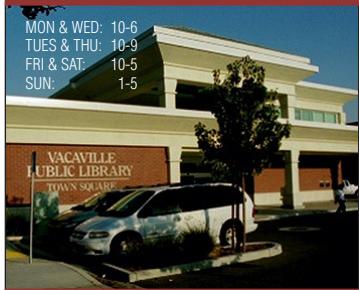


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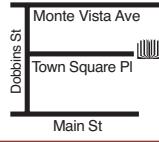


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SUN: 1-5



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VACAVILLE, CA 95688



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Solano County Library Headquarters

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Tel 866-572-7587
Fax 707-421-7474

solanolibrary.com