

Community Involvement

Friends of the Library I



Merced: The Friends of the Merced County Public Library organization (FOL-pictured left) was incorporated as a group in May of 1967. The mission of the organization is to support and enhance library services and facilities in Merced County. Members of the Friends recently celebrated the 40th birthday of their support of the library. A spokesperson for the FOL voiced thanks to George Barrett, Alice Osborn, Margaret Randolph (pictured below-1st from left), Vera Walstead, and Mariam Wilson for the vision they had in seeking the opportunity for a group such as this.

The focus has varied over the years. In 1976, the group participated in the dedication of the new central library building at 2100 O St. In 1989, the Friends and their supporters were responsible for raising \$7,000 to maintain as many open hours for the library as possible.

In the past six years, the Friends group has underwritten the summer reading program, provided funds for the "Books for Babies" program, and presented storytellers of national renown (pictured below-2nd from left). With monetary backing from the FOL, the children's department has provided a monthly "Family Night" with as many as 250 people in attendance. The Friends group has also underwritten a homework help program available online at Tutor.com.



Atwater: The Atwater Friends of Library (pictured right) began in the mid 1990s. One of the major accomplishments of the Friends was keeping the library open during a critical budget cut in the 1990s. When all Merced County libraries were facing reduced hours and possible closure, the Atwater FOL was able to raise enough money not only to keep the library open, but also to keep the hours of operation without reduction.

The FOL has made an extra effort to provide activities for the community to keep them coming into the library and using the facilities. They had movie nights with popcorn, a Guitar Hero's contest that lasted through the summer, and on-going crafting workshops which are enjoyed by adults and children (pictured above-4th from left). They recently held the 2nd annual Easter Egg Hunt (pictured above-3rd from left). The Summer Ice Cream Social is always popular. In December, the FOL has a Christmas Boutique and a free children's gift table for children to pick out and wrap gifts for their parents.

Many people help the Atwater FOL from volunteering in the bookstore to donating books, magazines, and videos. Although the FOL started small, with few volunteers and few goals, it has grown as the needs of the library and the needs of the library community have grown.

