

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION OR PHOTOS, CONTACT:
JOHN PAUL MYRICK, REGIONAL LIBRARIAN @ 870-347-5331

FINALLY!

New McCrory Branch Library opens to public on its 7th Anniversary

(MCCRORY) On June 14, 2014, in a cooperative effort, the City of McCrory, the Woodruff County Library Board and the East Central Arkansas Regional Library opened a branch library in the old Water Department Building on Second Street. The facility was expected to meet the needs of Eastern Woodruff and Western Cross Counties for many, many years. Within a year, county and regional library officials realized they needed more room.

Exactly seven years to the day later, that need was met as the East Central Arkansas Regional Library and the Woodruff County Library Board opened the new Nell Williams Memorial - McCrory Branch Library on Edmonds Avenue at 115 Edmonds Avenue, North in the heart of downtown.

The building had once had served as the location of Best Drugs and, before that, a television shop. It was built around 1930. The interior had been rebuilt after a fire in the 1970s and an addition made to the back of the building. After serving as a video rental store, it came up for sale in late 2016. With Board approval, Regional Librarian John Paul Myrick made an offer for purchase of the facility. The owner, Mr. Edward Williams of Newport, refused the offer. Instead, Williams offered to donate the building to the Library Board with the simple requirement that the facility serve as a memorial to his late wife.

After three attempts over three years, a Community Block Development Grant was awarded by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. With additional federal, state and library funds, renovation work began in 2020. Furnishings were provided by another grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Work was delayed due to COVID 19, especially the delivery of new furnishings. The move was then further delayed by contractor errors, and by CenturyLink Telecommunications (now Lumen), who finally completed installation of telephone and Internet services on June 25th.

The project was, in many ways, a community effort. Students from the McCrory High School EAST program held a haunted house which raised funds for the renovation. They also assisted with the interior demolition work, as did the City of McCrory Public Works Department. Donations from an "Anonymous Alumnus" of McCrory High School, former McCrory businessperson Eva Kyle, and many smaller donations helped with the project. The City of

McCrary also completed a streetscape on Edmonds Avenue last year which improved parking, sidewalks, and handicapped access to the facility. The grant, though supporting the County Library, was funneled through the city government to meet federal requirements.

The new library offers over 2,200 square feet of space for library services. Furnishings were designed to be moved to allow spaces to be reconfigured as needed or to creating room for special events. The new facility offers an ADA accessible restroom, a work area for library staff, and a small study room which doubles as a local history room. A much larger children's area is available for young persons, which has been named for a local long-time library supporter.

Technology was not overlooked in the planning of the facility, with the number of public computers increasing from four to eight, and upgraded printing and scanning equipment. Wi-Fi service was moved from the location and the signal boosted as bandwidth was increased to 100 Mbps. A large screen near the entrance and service desk displays information about library events and services.

It is not too late to support the new library. Donations will be accepted to help pay for the furnishings. Naming opportunities for larger donations are also available. Donations can also be given to honor persons or as memorials, with plaques being placed on the furniture piece or the area to recognize the donation or honoree. For more information, contact Karen Golden at the Woodruff County Library at 870-347-5331.

In related news, bids were opened for the badly needed Children's Wing at the Augusta Branch of the Woodruff County Library on June 29th. There was roughly a \$50,000 shortfall between the project budget and the bid cost. The architect and contractor are looking at ways to cut construction costs so that this project can proceed. The City of Augusta is helping the County Library by serving as the awardee for this project.

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