

Ventura County libraries get ready to hit the road

Alicia Doyle, Special to Ventura County Star



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The Ventura County Library bookmobile, which is scheduled to hit the road next year, will offer computers, Wi-Fi access, STEM technology, a 3D printer, books and more for those with limited or no access to library services.

“This is very exciting because this will put the only bookmobile on the road in Ventura County,” said Ventura County Library Director Nancy Schram. “What this is going to enable us to do is partner with other libraries, schools, corporations and organizations throughout the county, and by doing that we can bring library services to community members of all ages who might not otherwise have access to them.”

The bookmobile will also include reading materials for all ages in both English and Spanish.

“There will be 12 computers on board and access to the internet through our vehicle,” Schram said. “It will also serve as a Wi-Fi hot spot so we can connect people to the internet in rural and other areas where they don’t have access to the internet.”

Local librarians plan to take the bookmobile to specific locations to conduct classes or activities related to STEAM — science, technology, engineering and math — such as circuitry, computer coding and three-dimensional printing.

“Sometimes, for children in underserved areas of the county, this will be the first time that they’ll be introduced to these types of STEAM skills and technology that they’re going to need in the 21st century workforce,” Schram said. “We can also introduce them to future careers that focus on those skills.”

Various book collections will also be on board.

“Depending on where we’re going, whether it’s a senior living facility or a school, we can bring books with us that are tailored to that specific audience,” Schram said.

The vehicle can also be booked for special events, including those in other library districts.

“For example, the city of Simi Valley, Moorpark and Santa Paula — we’ll go out to those communities and let their librarians talk to people about specific activities and events at their libraries,” Schram said. “We’re focusing on getting library services to people and introducing them to the library, regardless of it’s in our system or another city-owned and operated system.”

The bookmobile was made possible by funds raised by the Ventura County Library Foundation and a federal grant. The foundation presented a \$100,000 check to the Ventura County Library System at the Aug. 7 Ventura County Board of Supervisors meeting. A grant awarded by the California State Library matched those funds.

“This would not have been possible without receiving a federal grant,” said Sandy Berg, chair of the Ventura County Library Foundation. “To receive this grant the library system had to have \$100,000 to match immediately, so because we had the funds readily available, we were able to receive this grant.”

The foundation raised the \$100,000 through the Ventura County community.

“Our largest donation was \$50,000 from Premiere America Credit Union and was specifically designated for the bookmobile,” Berg said. In addition, “the Oxnard Harbor District has given us \$5,000 a year for five years to sustain the bookmobile to remain current in its material and technology.

The bookmobile also will be a “green machine,” in alignment with environmental responsibility, Berg said.

“It’s going to be on the road five days a week at least, plus all the little fairs and places to spread the message that literacy is readily available through this bookmobile,” Berg said.

Officials hope to launch the bookmobile next April, during National Library Week, scheduled April 7 through 13.

“We do hope to have a launch event,” Schram said. “We’re going to really ramp it up, telling people about it, what’s available on it — and get on the road in 2019.”