

## Waterford Branch Library Profile

The Stanislaus County Public Library system serves the slightly more than half a million people who live in Stanislaus County, located in California's agricultural Central Valley. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's State and County QuickFacts, 48.7 percent of the population is Caucasian/White, 40.3 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino, and 5.2 percent of the population is Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The county's population is also one of the youngest in the state, as "the median age is 32.3" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). "Of all households, 36.2% (56,197) have children under the age of 18" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). The mean income per person in the county is \$16,913, less than the state average of \$22,711 (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). The largest employers are the county itself, followed by "Signature Foods, Modesto City Schools, E. & J. Gallo Winery, Del Monte Corporation, Memorial Hospitals Association, and Doctors Medical Center" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006).

Because of seasonal agricultural jobs, the unemployment rate ranges from 9-15%. While 26% of the population had only a high school diploma or GED in 1990, that figure had risen to 30.1% in 2003 (ACS est.) 20.7 % have attended some college and just 13.9 have four years of college. It is estimated that 24% of the population is functionally illiterate. (Stanislaus County Library, 2006).

Stanislaus County's vision is to be a "county that is respected for its service in the community and is known as the best in America" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). Its mission is "to serve the public interest by promoting public health, safety, welfare and the local economy in an efficient, cost-effective manner" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006).

Likewise, the county's library system places strong interest in excellent customer service and "support for economic development, local business, children, consumers and others," amongst its many other goals and values (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). The Library's mission is "to foster the love of reading and to open the door to knowledge" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). The Library strives for "...qualified, trained, and friendly staff...cooperation and partnerships with other community agencies, information delivery via the best technologies and formats available, encouragement of lifelong learning and the love of reading through programming and marketing," as well as providing "safe places to search, dream, and learn" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). The Stanislaus County and Stanislaus County Library mission statements serve to bolster the message that an informed citizenry leads to the enrichment of lives and building better communities.

The 13 branches of the Stanislaus County Public Library system are located in various cities and towns across the 2000 square mile county (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The main branch is housed in Modesto, the largest city in the county, and the other branches are seated in Ceres, Denair, Empire, Hughson, Keyes, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Salida, Turlock, and Waterford. The Library system is also well-used, growing as the county has grown:

Circulation has grown from 993,806 in 1994 to 2.16 million items in 2005. During FY 2004-2005, 151,099 reference questions were answered and customers logged 242,812 computer sessions. Attendance at library programs for adults totaled 1,672 and 8,580 people attended programs for children and teens. Another 39,059 attended children's storytimes. (Stanislaus County Library, 2006)

The Library system is funded largely through a 1/8 cent sales tax and "... the state-wide Public Library Foundation, local public facilities fees, county contribution, and from grants" (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). However, while 84% of the library budget is provided by the 1/8 cent sales tax, the recent economic recession has caused the budget to plummet. While the budget was \$12.1 million dollars in 2006-2007, the budget has decreased steadily. The proposed budget for FY 2009/2010 is \$9,905,284, and for FY 2010/2011, the proposed budget is \$8,387,667; which is an over \$1.5 million decrease from the previous year and a \$3.7 million decrease from 2006-2007 (Stanislaus County Library, 2010a). Beginning in the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the library reduced the book budget county-wide by 15 percent. To further cut down on costs, all the Library system branches are closed on Friday and Sunday. In 2008, the Stanislaus County laid off 79 positions. This included three full time workers and 68 part time workers (Stapley, 2010). In April of 2010 an announcement was made that a further 16% of the work force would be reduced at the library, with the continued layoffs of nine full time and 16 part time workers (Stapley, 2010).

All branches are open Monday through Thursday and Saturday, but times vary by branch (Stanislaus County Library, 2010b). The entire Library system is housed within 148,447 square feet. This represents 0.29 square feet per capita. A square footage standard of 0.50 square feet per person is commonly used in library planning documents. Using this standard, the hypothetical total square footage needed *today* would be 255,000 square feet or 106,553 square feet *more*, an over 70% increase, than currently exists in the County's Library service (Stanislaus County Library, 2006). As the County continues to grow, more footage is needed. Several building projects have been proposed to increase footage, but these have been put on hold to the decline in the economy.

Waterford is the eighth largest city located within Stanislaus County “with a population which has grown steadily from 2,683 in 1980...” to approximately 8,860 today (City of Waterford, n.d.; Stanislaus County Library, 2010c). The steady rise in population has only enhanced the Waterford Branch Library’s need for a new facility, with which is currently shares with the County Sheriff. The current building is 2,170 square feet (C. Scott, personal email communication, September 30, 2010). Before the economic decline, Stanislaus County and the City of Waterford proposed a new joint facility to house both the branch library and the County Sheriff substation.

The proposed facility would include approximately 22,000 square feet with parking lot for about 150 visitors and staff. Shared-use community meeting space would be provided to allow for conferences, seminars, meetings, classes or programs. Shared space would be provided to enhance customer access to County services. Various development options and sites are currently being reviewed. (Stanislaus County Library, 2005).

However, as the project is on hold, the approximately 8,800 residents of rural Waterford continue to use a small building for its community center despite the fact that it does not include a community room or enough space for meetings larger than ten persons at one table (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c).

The Waterford Library began due to the determination of Mrs. Nora Ballard. She used twelve of her personal books and began the first library in the basement of the Community Baptist Church in Waterford on September 13, 1912 (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c). In 1920 Mrs. Ballard moved the library into her own garage as more space was needed to fulfill the greater community demand for materials (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c). The garage library remained until 1964 when she passed away. What is now the current facility opened in 1965 and

was christened the Nora Ballard Library. The community had great monetary input in the library since they donated over half the building costs (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c). Currently, the library houses a collection valued at \$504,297 (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c).

Waterford is an isolated part of the county, as it is the eastern-most city, away from freeways and large stores and businesses. It is interesting to note that there is only one other bookstore listed within the official Waterford business listings, and that is an online bookstore that only sells booklets (City of Waterford, 2010). Therefore, the Waterford Branch Library is truly the only source of reading material in the whole city besides the six school libraries which serve only Waterford students. This fact is also demonstrated in the newly released statistics for library card users in Waterford: virtually 74% of the population has a library card (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c).

As in most libraries, the Waterford branch also serves as a gathering place for all residents because it provides free wifi, free internet access via their computers, local knitting clubs, knitting classes, crafts, book clubs, and preschool storytimes. According to the branch manager, Cindy Scott:

There are very few places for people to go to meet, to study, to find entertainment. The library [is] the only place for computers outside of the public schools. We support the community by aiding literacy efforts with reading programs and giving students a safe place to go after school. Older adults enjoy our craft and needlework programs, as well as occasional informational programs. We also support VITA free tax prep programs...customers come to the library and have their taxes prepared for free while they wait. (personal email communication, September 30, 2010)

In the past year, Waterford has had 10,189 computer sessions on its six internet computers and word processors, 36 storytimes, 13 school visits, 88 programs performed, 5 community presentations, has answered 3,874 reference questions and has circulated 50,181 books—about 7.69 books per borrower (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c)! Waterford Library brings in an estimated \$180,436 in tax revenue, but costs \$247,351 to maintain operating expenses, salaries, services, etc, (Stanislaus County Library, 2010c).

The Friends of the Waterford Library (affectionately called FOWL with a chicken mascot, a nod to their rural roots) have depleted their resources to help maintain the high level of customer service at the library that the Waterford community is used to receiving, despite a crumbling county budget. The FOWL budget is largely based on donations and book sales of community donated books. In the past year they have donated approximately \$400 for crafts, programs, subscriptions, etc; \$200 towards a ceiling insulation project, and \$700 towards the book budget. This money was donated due to the large need for books, but has not been set aside for future donations. While this is certainly a great help, FOWL savings have been virtually eliminated and even their donation opportunities are drying up (C. Scott, personal email communication, September 7, 2010). Outside of FOWL, the Waterford business community has partnered with the branch to support the library's reading programs. According to branch manager Cindy Scott, the Waterford Subway was involved in the 3 Books in 3 Weeks program. "19 local businesses provided prizes for our first ever Adult Summer Reading Program. We had the largest participation in the county for the Adult Summer Reading this year with 379 review forms turned in" (C. Scott, personal email communication, September 30, 2010).

The Waterford branch has specific needs for its current building, as well as needs for programming and collection development. These range from repaving the parking lot; an interior

and exterior paint job; the need for some comfortable medium-sized chairs for studying, reading, and crafting in the back lounge area of the library; a larger book drop-off box; an increased budget for books; and funds for various programming and craft projects. The current book budget for the branch is approximately \$2,500 for adult fiction and nonfiction, and the children's book budget is approximately \$976 (C. Scott, personal email communication, September 30, 2010). While it is obvious Waterford Library has a long list of needs, their main focus remains on updating, cultivating and maintaining their book collection so that they can continue to focus on their main goal: to foster the love and care of reading. The materials budget is based upon the regional circulations statistics by the Acquisitions Department of Stanislaus County Library. The other materials available within Waterford Library such as DVD's, periodicals, large print, and teen materials) are considered "floating" material and thus get transferred to and from the libraries quite frequently (C. Scott, personal email communication, September 30, 2010). One of the most popular teen crafts is button-making. The Stanislaus County Library has a small button machine that is rotated between the branches. The Waterford branch has identified a need for its own, slightly bigger machine and related supplies.

The Waterford branch is at the heart of its community, and its citizens deserve a nice place to nurture their love of reading and flourish as a community. Libraries are essential for fostering informal learning and creative and intellectual pursuits. Having a sustainable library in a rural area like Waterford may be even more crucial, as the opportunities for such efforts are more limited than in the larger surrounding areas of the county. By obtaining monies donated for specific projects or general use, grants can help aid a town treasure.

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