

LIBRARY RESPONDS TO COMMUNITY INPUT WITH NEW SERVICE PRIORITIES

Redwood City Public Library's strategic plan, which aligns very closely with the City Council's strategic goals, was completed at the end of 2016, and the Library's staff has been very busy in the development of a new set of service priorities for 2017 and beyond.

Over the last six months of 2016, the Library held sixteen community conversations as part of an initiative called RCPL Listens. These sessions were attended by over 200 residents of Redwood City and North Fair Oaks. Utilizing the Harwood Institute's community engagement model, the conversations focused on people's aspirations for the kind of community they would like Redwood City to be, with an additional focus on how the Library could help meet those aspirations. Conversations were held at libraries, community centers, service group meetings, school and

college campuses, the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, and Peninsula Covenant Church.

Attendees ranged in age from middle school students to seniors, represented a spectrum from heavily engaged library volunteers to people who never use libraries; and included residents of neighborhoods throughout Redwood City, including Redwood Shores and North Fair Oaks. One session was conducted bilingually in English and Spanish, and another conversation was conducted entirely in Spanish.

Notes and transcripts from the conversations were analyzed to identify themes that suggested potential courses of action for developing library programs and services that help the community to achieve its aspirations. Three undergraduate students from Stanford assisted Library staff with analysis of the conversations as part of their coursework for Community Based Research As A Tool For Social Action under the guidance of Professor Ameltha F. Ball.

The following five community aspirations form the basis for our new service priorities. To see more detail about the specific programs and activities aligned with each aspiration, which we hope will help cultivate an even better community in Redwood City, please visit: <http://www.redwoodcity.org/departments/library/rcpl-info/service-priorities>

Aspiration 1: Redwood City is welcoming and inclusive, celebrates the diversity of our population, and enjoys a friendly, neighborly community spirit.

Aspiration 2: Redwood City provides opportunities for community members of all income levels.

Aspiration 3: Residents have more awareness of existing programs and services.

Aspiration 4: Redwood City is a safe place for children and families.

Aspiration 5: All Redwood City children have access to quality educational opportunities.

Finally, to encapsulate all of the Library's services and the ways in which they are delivered, the Redwood City Library Board adopted a new mission statement for the Library: Redwood City Public Library cultivates community by welcoming all people to experience the shared joys of literacy and learning. This connects with the City of Redwood City's mission to build a great community together, emphasizes the Library's longtime commitment to literacy and learning, and highlights the way we do our work: inclusively for everyone in our community, by going beyond transactions to create experiences, and most importantly to me, by sharing the joy in what we do.

Editor's note: This article and information is supplied by Derek Wolfram, Library Director at the Redwood City Public Library. Look for similar articles in upcoming Spectrum Magazine issues.