

Kyle Library History



Most people assume the present Kyle Library was built by the city and is totally supported by tax dollars. Nope. That's what happens in some cities, but in Kyle, a group called "Friends of the Kyle Library" started the library, supported it single-handedly for its first 40 years of existence, and continues to support it to the tune of at least \$35,000 a year. That's your tax money that's being saved, in case you're wondering.

No one imagined that a building would ever be constructed to house the books that this small group of citizens, usually referred to as FOKL, or simply as "the Friends," gathered together to start the first library in Kyle. The books, mostly used, and donated from private homes, numbered about 200 when the library opened in the 1960s in the back room of a Center Street store, the Bon Ton, where the new City Hall now stands.

The first jump for the library was a move to a back room in the old City Hall. Still small, but growing, it had found a home of its own. The second jump was a quantum leap. Jack and Burdine Johnson offered to build a library if the town would raise \$5,000 for books, and the Friends eagerly agreed.

It wasn't easy to raise \$5,000 in a town of less than 700 souls, as Kyle was at that time, but the Friends worked tirelessly with bake sales, auctions, and whatever else they could imagine, and made it happen. The library became a reality, opening in 1962 in a fine new stone building stocked with new books and an untrained "librarian" from the Friends group, hired at the princely sum of \$20 a month. Helping out in the new library were always the Friends.

The library is now operated by the city and has a genuine librarian and director, Connie Brooks and a paid staff. More than 35,000 books, audio books, DVDs, and videos are available for lending. Its 19 public access computers are in constant use, and classes are held for people of all ages. Summer reading programs draw hundreds of children in attendance. Approximately 8,000 people pass through its doors each month, a number that's growing daily.

The first library building was spacious for a town of 700. Now, at 40 times that size, Kyle has found its library quarters not quite so spacious, to say the least. Even with two additions, it has been seriously overcrowded for years, and the new library will be a monumental change even though the original building

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will be left behind with nostalgia.

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