

County celebrates Port Charlotte Library history

By Hector Flores

Today, patrons and staff will gather to say farewell to the Port Charlotte Library on Aaron Street. Join us for a farewell ceremony at 10:30 a.m., followed by a community barbecue from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. with hot dogs, hamburgers, music, historical displays and more.

Computers, Wi-Fi and printing services will remain available through July 11 at 6 p.m. The public can also shop the shelves from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on July 11. Materials are \$5 per bag, with proceeds supporting library programming in the Port Charlotte area.

The first library in Port Charlotte opened 65 years ago as part of the Port Charlotte Adult Education Association, a non-profit funded by General Development Corporation after new residents of the young community sought educational and cultural activities in retirement, according to the late local historian Lindsey Williams. Ironically, the library element of what was known as Port Charlotte University took root in conversations among volunteers clearing debris around the rented building on Tamiami Trail near Easy Street after Hurricane Donna impacted Charlotte County in 1960.

The existing library was built on land donated by GDC as part of a “cultural center.” It opened in 1968 along with a theater and community center that housed classrooms. It was funded by GDC, a state grant, private donors, and the school board known then as the Board of Public Instruction. The county allocated money from a new state revenue source derived from parimutuel wagering at dog and horse tracks.

Port Charlotte Library has been a workhorse of the library system since Hurricane Ian severely damaged Mid-County Regional Library on Forrest Nelson Boulevard a few miles north. It housed some staff displaced by the storm and served thousands of patrons seeking the services they enjoyed at Mid-County.

With Mid-County Regional Library reopening in May, patrons of Port Charlotte Library have a state-of-the art facility to meet their needs. The Community Services Department is working with Charlotte County Transit to stand up a free shuttle service several days a week from the Port Charlotte Library site to Mid-County. Of course, anyone can reserve a free Transit ride right from their home to Mid-County Monday through Saturday by calling 941-575-4000. You can also reserve a ride using the Charlotte Rides mobile app, which you can download from your carrier’s app store.

While the Port Charlotte Library is closing, it’s the beginning of planning for its future. The proposed replacement library is included as part of the Cultural Center replacement project and is contingent upon voter approval of the extension of the 1% local option sales tax in November 2026. If approved, the project would have a dedicated funding source to create a modern library designed to serve the community for future generations.

*Readers may reach Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores at
Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.*