



Just as it should be: children enjoying their time at the Ledyard Public Library

A report on the 25th Anniversary gift

Love Our Libraries!

Instead of taking gifts, the then-Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut gave a gift to the region on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 2008: a \$1.5 million package of grants and endowments to 13 public libraries from Old Lyme to Stonington.

As the Foundation prepared to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2008, the staff and board were in deep discussion about creating a major gift to the community. Thanks to a large and unrestricted bequest from the estate of Edmund O'Brien, the Foundation was able to set aside \$1.5 million to make a lasting impact in southeastern Connecticut. President Alice Fitzpatrick saw that a guaranteed way to touch each of our communities was through the libraries. The board of trustees agreed and the *Love Our Libraries* was established.

“At a critical point when our state’s and nation’s economies were collapsing and library funding was being slashed, Love Our Libraries made a loud statement that libraries matter, that they are critical elements in the success of our communities and the lives of their residents.”

Theresa Conley, Lyme Public Library

Looking back over the five years since, the gift to the 13 libraries has been transformational. Capital projects were undertaken, systems upgrades were made and boards and donors were engaged. Groton Public Library created *teenscape*, a comfortable place that has become a magnet for the town’s teenagers. The Public Library of New London envisioned a non-profit resource center and has become an official Foundation Center site with resources and workshops for the region’s service organizations. Technology upgrades have allowed the Stonington Free Library and Montville’s Raymond Library to automate systems and provide computer access to many more patrons.

Many libraries used the opportunity to galvanize their board members donor base. North Stonington’s Wheeler Library created the Jennie Wheeler Legacy Fund and received new bequests. Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library established a new designated endowment fund to support future needs, such as professional development for the staff, for years to come.

Roz Rubenstein of Waterford Public Library called Love Our Libraries “a once in a lifetime opportunity” to make a permanent impact on our important institutions. “The Community Foundation has always recognized the important issues facing our town and we are so grateful they continue supporting our mission to improve the quality of life”, says Betty Anne Reiter, Groton Public Library.