



DALIA A. PALCHIK
PROVIDENCE SUPERVISOR

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

Suite 218
3001 VADEN DRIVE
FAIRFAX, VA 22031

TELEPHONE 703-560-6946
FAX 703-207-3541

providence@fairfaxcounty.gov

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Board Matter

15th Anniversary of the Oakton Library

Members of the Board,

The Oakton Library will celebrate its 15th Anniversary this year. The Oakton Library has a rich history and demonstrates how public and private partnerships can work successfully to achieve common goals.

The library began in 1996 when the Fairfax County Public Library System identified a need for a new library near Vienna and Fairfax. Exercising vigor and talents, members of the Oakton Women's Club went to work right away to champion for a new library in the village of Oakton. When the developer of the library's eventual site of 19 acres wanted to build townhomes there, the Oakton's Women's Club joined the Friends of Oakton, Options for Oakton, the Hunter Mill Defense League, and many more to rise in opposition.

United, these community leaders persuaded then Supervisor Gerry Connolly (now Congressman Connolly) to deny the developer's plan and search for a community supported proposal. Mr. Connolly secured an agreement with the developer to build 52 houses rather than 123 townhomes and to donate three acres with a value of more than \$2 million for the new library.

Once the acreage for the library was transferred to Fairfax County, community leaders Janet Kerr Tener, Ralph Tener, and Linda Byrne got together and established the non-profit group, the Friends of Oakton Library in 2003 to raise funds to support and foster a strong community connection with the library. The next-door neighbor at the site, Unity Church, graciously invited the Friends to come in and hold fundraising events and book sales at the church.

The Friends of the Oakton Library and the Fairfax County Library Foundation expedited a 2004 bond referendum to pave the way for the library's construction at a cost of \$5.57 million. The ground-breaking took place on April 8, 2006, and on September 28, 2007, the Oakton Library, an environmentally minded public space for reading, studying, and sharing ideas, opened to the public. The Oakton Library provides a place to gather, meet and learn both inside and outside. It gives the village of Oakton an identity and last year, despite being closed for three months due to COVID-19, welcomed 63,382 visitors.

We are indebted to the many individuals who worked tirelessly over a decade to bring the library to fruition. Congressman Connolly, former Providence District Supervisor Linda Smyth, the staff of the Fairfax County Public Library, and many more contributed hours "to the cause," and we thank them. I hope members of the Board will join me and celebrate this wonderful resource.

Therefore, I move without objection that the Board recognize the 15th anniversary of the Oakton Public Library with a proclamation to be presented at the anniversary celebration on September 24, 2022, and to thank the many individuals and groups who helped create, build, and sustain the Oakton Library.