Library Interior Design Project Completed

Last fall, the Northwest Georgia Regional Library asked the Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership for assistance in creating a Workforce Development Center in the ground level of the Dalton library. With an eye towards a promising grant opportunity, the library specifically asked for help developing a functional design plan for the space that would utilize existing resources and amenities but create a bright new space for learning.

After conversations with Archway Coordinator of Operations, Sue Chapman, Associate Director and Interior Design Chair of the Lamar Dodd School of Art, Thom Houser, volunteered for the task. Dr. Houser traveled to Dalton in December to meet with library staff and tour the room contemplated for the redesign. He then returned to Athens, where he and Linda Floyd, Northwest Georgia Regional Library Director, continued their work long-distance.

In February, Professor Houser returned to Dalton to share the final plans with Linda Floyd and Library Board Chair, Tangela Johnson. “The plans far exceeded our expectations, including every element we had requested while allowing the space to flow seamlessly,” said Linda Floyd. “The Library Board is very appreciative of everything Archway and Professor Houser have done to help facilitate this project!” These plans were presented to an anonymous, generous donor who has matched a State Legislative approved Allocation of $100,000 with the required $100,000. Construction on the project should begin this summer. The new center will house: one large and one small classroom, tutoring rooms, a collaborative workspace with table and computers, a technology helpdesk with library staff, a comfortable seating area with electrical outlets for laptops and other wireless device usage, copy and fax machines, and printers. This will be a state-of-the art learning facility open to the public with free classes.

Linda Floyd (center), stands with Thom Houser at a planning meeting.
Saturday Academy Pilot Program Wraps Up

On March 8, a pilot family literacy program titled “Saturday Academy” kicked off with over 45 children, 19 families, and 25 volunteers. Since then, the Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership has hosted and facilitated five more consecutive, fun-filled Saturdays for 3-5 year olds and their families at the local Community Center. To enhance school readiness for young children and their families, community partners worked together to host parent education classes, parent-child interactive classes, and family fun time.

Total, 30 families with 68 children participated, and 54 volunteers devoted a total of 357 hours to help serve breakfast and lunch, lead classes, assist with check-in, and more. Fifteen organizations collaborated to pull off the six week program. At the conclusion of Saturday Academy, participants experienced a “graduation” ceremony where they were awarded with certificates signed by their teachers and parents. Following the ceremony, participating families and the rest of the community were invited to attend a Week of the Young Child celebration that included inflatables and an ice cream social sponsored by the local Parks and Recreation Department.

Now that the pilot has ended, researchers will analyze parent and child data to determine if the programming was effective in building parent capacity, improving home learning environments, and enhancing preschoolers’ school readiness skills. A news article about the final Saturday Academy can be read here, and pictures of the event can be seen on our Facebook page here.

First Five Presents at Local Kiwanis Club

On March 14, the Dalton Kiwanis Club invited members of the Archway Partnership First Five Coalition to provide an update on their efforts. First Five Coalition Chair, Dixie Kinard, launched the presentation by giving a history of the coalition and noting the Coalition’s success in bringing many diverse parties to the table. Archway Education Professional Katy Green then followed with a brief overview of some of the Coalition’s recent successes and pending projects. First Five Coalition Early Literacy Chair, Caroline Woodason, followed up Katy’s remarks with opportunities for engagement for club members. Finally, Archway Professional Melissa Lu thanked club members for on-going support.

The presentation can be seen here.

Spring Book Drive Proves Successful

The Archway Partnership’s most recent book drive concluded on March 16 with more than 1,100 books donated! Approximately 400 of the child-appropriate books were handed out at the community’s recent pre-k registration; more than 300 were distributed at Saturday Academy graduation and the following Week of the Young Child celebration. Other recipient organizations/programs include Sharing is Caring (a program for families who have earned credits by participating in parenting and enrichment classes) and Book Nooks (bookshelves containing child-appropriate books that are making their way to local businesses and waiting areas in the community). The ultimate goal of the book drive is to foster at-home reading for children with minimal exposure to books and family reading at home.
**Oasis Tutoring Field Trip**

On March 20, Archway Professionals and Father Paul Williams visited the Oasis Tutoring Program in Athens, Georgia. Oasis Tutoring is a tutoring and support program created by Catholic nuns in a trailer park previously riddled with gangs and other issues in the Athens area. UGA students of diverse majors and backgrounds support the program by volunteering time to tutor students after school.

The program has seen much success in Athens since its inception, and some Dalton-Whitfield community members are anxious to explore how it can be implemented locally. Find out more about Oasis Tutoring [here](#).

**Archway Staff Meet with Local High School Students**

As a means of enhancing summer learning opportunities for local children, Archway is exploring the possibility of facilitating a regularly occurring bilingual literacy publication printed by the Dalton Daily Citizen newspaper. On March 26, Archway professionals Melissa Lu and Katy Green visited a Morris Innovative High School Spanish class to discuss the class’s interest in writing bilingual books and providing literacy services around the community. A picture of their visit with the students is captured below. Following their visit, Morris Innovative High School teacher Sandy Crowe attended and recruited students (and her daughter!) to assist with Saturday Academy activities.

![Image of students with Archway staff](image-url)

**Archway at Pre-K Registration**

In support of the community-wide Pre-K registration hosted by the two local school systems and Family Connection, Archway’s Readers to Leaders VISTA assisted in handing out more than 400 books at pre-k registration, and creating and distributing resource packets to parents. The resource packets included a list of pre-k programs and Head Starts in the area, as well as parent resource guides. Hats off to all volunteers who made this annual initiative a success!

**First Five Coalition Celebrates Week of the Young Child**

As part of the national Week of the Young Child celebrated across the country April 6-12, the Dalton-Whitfield community honored young children and all those who make a difference in children’s lives. The First Five Coalition had several articles included in the newspaper, one of which can be read [here](#). The coalition encouraged local churches, schools, and organizations to publicly honor childcare workers. The group ended the week on April 12 by hosting a public
celebration at the local community center that included inflatables and an ice cream social sponsored by the Dalton Parks and Recreation department. Pictures of the event can be viewed on our Facebook page here.