Workforce Development Center Created in Library

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In 2013, the Northwest Georgia Regional Library requested assistance from the Archway Partnership to design a Learning and Technology Training Center (LTTC) in an unused area of the Library’s basement. The mission of the LTTC is to serve the community as a multi-purpose educational center. Programs include workforce development (to include math, computer skills, and language development for Spanish speaking residents preparing for the workforce), development of early literacy skills with a focus on reading, writing, and math, and college preparation with career assessment assistance.

The Archway Partnership recruited Thom Houser, Associate Director and Interior Design Chair of the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia, to create a functional and aesthetically pleasing design for the space that utilized existing resources and amenities. Dr. Houser made site visits to the library and worked closely with the Library Director and Board Chair to gather input on the final interior layout. In response to the designs, Library Director Linda Floyd said, “The plans far exceeded our expectations, including every element we had requested while allowing the space to flow seamlessly.”

In order to implement the design, the Library secured funding through a matching grant program funded by the state legislature and the gift of an anonymous donor to the Dalton-Whitfield Library Foundation. The City of Dalton provided additional funding for furnishings, technology and project coordination while Whitfield County contributed funding for technology, instructional workforce development software and literacy materials.

The LTTC includes two classrooms that can be used for hands-on crafting, computer training and workforce development classes. Private tutoring spaces are available and free tutoring is provided by volunteers from Dalton State College and retired teachers. A computer lab is located in this area and additional seating is available for patrons using wireless devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. The LTTC also offers patrons the chance to try new technologies such as a 3-D printer, Chrome Boxes or tablets.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the LTTC on September 30, 2014. Since that time, the space has been used regularly for various workforce development activities. Countless members of the community have taken advantage of the 3D printer, computer lab, meeting spaces, private tutoring rooms, computer training classes, language classes, and comfortable seating areas for wireless device use. Library Director Linda Floyd said, “This has truly been a community project from the beginning. Our hope is that this will be a place of learning for all ages, a place of exploration of ideas and concepts.”

Advancing Community Priorities
The Whitfield Archway Partnership identified the need to enhance workforce development in order to meet the needs of local industry and further community development. The creation of a center devoted to learning and technology meets the community-identified priority of establishing a model environment for education and learning.