

Remodeled library nears completion

By Larry D. Wilder
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FORT VALLEY — Come Jan. 4, Jimmy Smith hopes everything will be in place at the newly remodeled Thomas Memorial Library in Fort Valley.

But until then, he is pleased that clients already are using the expanded services the renovation has made possible.



Jimmy Smith

Director of Libraries response has been good. We've only had to close for one day during renovation work. That was to move over," he said. "The community came in, formed lines and helped pass books back. Even little kids came and sit in chairs passing books. The response has been just great."

WORK ON THE \$500,000, 12,000-square-foot expansion started in February. Smith said a weekend

"Surprisingly enough, library circulation was greater for the period of construction than it was for a similar period last year," said Smith, director of Peach County public libraries.

"So the public response has been good. We've only had to close for one day during renovation work. That was to move over," he said. "The community came in, formed lines and helped pass books back. Even little kids came and sit in chairs passing books. The response has been just great."

of activities highlighting the expansion have been planned beginning on Jan. 4 with a 7 p.m. reception for Fort Valley State College President Luther Burse. Following the reception Eugene Flem, artist in residence at Middle Georgia College in Cochran, will present a piano concert.

On Jan. 5, a children's day will be held with puppet shows and films. On Jan. 6 beginning at 3 p.m., a formal dedication will be held. State School Superintendent Charles McDaniel will be the featured guest.

Smith said the renovated library will offer a broad range of services not previously available to clients.

"We'll have additional space for books," Smith said. "We had run out of space in the old library. The expansion gives us roughly twice as much room. We'll have a special room for audio-visuals, material for talking books and a children's activity area with a small stage that can be used for other library activities.

"For example, the piano concert by Flem and the puppet show for children's day will be held there. We have remodeled the public meeting room, which is available to groups in the community at no charge. We'll have a special collections room for basic

Jimmy Smith inspects initialed bricks in wall of remodeled Thomas Memorial Library Schoolchildren donated \$2.50 each to have bricks personalized with their initials, placed on outside wall of building

genealogical research and local history. This will double as a second, small meeting room."

ALSO AVAILABLE WILL be 42 additional seats for study and individual study sections — none of which were available before expansion.

"Basically, what it gets to is: there are so many additional opportunities for service, things that we could not

do before," said Smith. "This library was made possible by taxpayers and by individual contributions. Therefore, we'll look for every way we can to provide service."

Also coming up is a new library in Byron, Smith said. He said bids for the 4,000-square-foot building already have been let.

"We hope to begin construction there by the first of the year," Smith

said. "It's very easy to say what additional services will be provided there because we have little space at all and restricted hours. We'll have study tables, a book collection and a public meeting room. This will be an opportunity for Byron to get complete library service.

"The city of Byron has always supported library services, and we are

anxious to see a new library constructed. There just hasn't been adequate space available there. We hope to have the new library ready by the spring of the year."

As a result of expanded library services, Peach County is now one of a few Georgia counties that meets the American Library Association's standards for adequate library space for the population, Smith said.



JULIE MUELLER-BROWN/Macon Telegraph and News

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