



PRESS RELEASE

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Ascension Parish Library receives \$10,000 donation and pledge for additional \$10,000

Gonzales, LA – Ascension Parish Library (APL) received a \$10,000 donation to purchase materials for a collection centered on the African American experience with emphasis on the Deep South. The Jeannette Jefferson Collection, a collection to reflect the history, culture, and interests of African Americans, will be housed at APL’s Donaldsonville location. The donation from the Goette Family Fund includes a commitment to contribute an additional \$10,000 over the next two years to enhance the collection.

“The library is committed to offering programs and resources to keep our diverse community learning. Plans are being developed to renovate the Donaldsonville Branch. This donation will allow us to enhance the library’s collection to further tell the story of African Americans and their contributions to our nation,” said APL’s Director, John Stelly.

Ann Goette says this collection is her family’s homage to Jeannette Jefferson.

“My pride in having my mother recognized goes beyond words,” said Babbette Joseph, the eldest of Jefferson’s five children, who resides in Donaldsonville. “Her accomplishments – all that she did on her own and for others went far beyond the norm.”

Jefferson was born in Donaldsonville in 1913. She attended school through seventh grade and, at age 11, began working and earned a reputation as a legendary cook. She also toured as a blues singer. Despite not being allowed to continue her education, Jefferson continued to be an avid reader and was instrumental in getting Black residents in Donaldsonville to vote.

In 1958, Jefferson had life-threatening surgery and was told she would never walk again. A woman of strong faith, she prayed that if she had use of her legs again, she would help others.

“Our family was her good deed,” Goette said. “When our mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, Jeannette caught a ride to Baton Rouge every morning and spent the day helping with our mother and preparing meals. Eight months later, when our father became ill, Jeannette again made the daily commute back and forth.”

Goette said when Jefferson died in 1983, she and her siblings were unable to attend the funeral. She hopes this investment into the Donaldsonville community will illuminate the story of African Americans – one she says is a story of brilliance and resilience.



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“Donaldsonville is a historical treasure. It is where the first African American citizen was appointed to serve as mayor; it is home to the River Road African American Museum and world-renowned folk artist Alvin Batiste,” said Henry Schexnayder, III chairman of the library board. “This donation presents us the opportunity to positively impact the community while honoring selfless and compassionate people like Jeannette Jefferson, whose generosity and service to others left a lasting impression on families like the Goettes.”

APL is in the process of procuring books and media for the collection.



Pictured l to r: Glynnis Alford, Donaldsonville Mayor Leroy Sullivan, Larie Myers, APL Board Chairman Henry Schexnayder, Ann Goette, Carrie Goodall, APL Board Vice Chairman Lisa Bacala, Christopher Achee, APL Director John Stelly, Kiley Manigault (Jefferson's great-grandson), Babbette Joseph, Janet Gauthier (Jefferson's granddaughter).

About APL

Ascension Parish Library (APL) is an award-winning library system committed to providing opportunities for lifelong learning to all ages. APL delivers needed resources through traditional library services, digital materials, and innovative programs. Ascension Parish Library encourages residents to read, learn, and create by visiting their local library.

To learn more, visit <https://www.myAPL.org/>.

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