

WWW.PRESSDEMOCRAT.COM

"It's beautiful. I like the mural, the openness, the colors."

EMILY LEPLBY, Rohnert Park

\$8.2 million RP library opens

Opening of 24,000-square-foot facility a big hit with 200 adults and children in attendance

By BOB NORBERG

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

ROHNERT PARK — Sonoma County opened its long-awaited, gleaming new library Sunday, an \$8.2 million facility that was six years in the making.

"It is a hall of learning," said Rohnert Park Mayor Armando Flores. "This is a library that invites you to learn, it challenges you to learn."

"It was a long wait, but it is here," said Lynne Conde, president of a steering committee and library foundation, which was instrumental in getting the facility constructed.

The library is Sonoma County's 13th, and at 24,000 square feet is more than double the size of the 10,000-square-foot library that it replaces.

It was built with Rohnert Park bond money and will be furnished, staffed and operated by the Sonoma County Library system.

The library has a main reading room, with a fireplace and couches for adults, plus a children's section



MARK ARONOFF / The Press Democrat

Brandon Frech, 4, holds his library card beneath a painted storybook mural on the ceiling of the new library in Rohnert Park on Sunday.

with a ceiling mural, done by artist Bob Eisenberg, depicting characters from children's literature.

Flores said those are some of the touches included by Berkeley architects Noll and Tam that mirror a new library in Aliso Viejo in Orange County.

The library was a hit with the 200 adults and children who eagerly

awaited the official opening.

"It's beautiful," said Emily Lepley of Rohnert Park, who was there with her husband and four children. "I like the mural, the openness, the colors. The other library was getting too small."

"It's the fanciest library I've ever

TURN TO LIBRARY, PAGE B3



MARK ARONOFF / The Press Democrat

Long lines at the check-out counter form at the new library in Rohnert Park on Sunday as the public gathered for the opening celebration. The facility was six years in the making.

LIBRARY: 60,000 books and plenty of room to grow

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

seen," said 10-year-old Nick Stalder of Rohnert Park, a frequent library patron who said he has 15 books checked out at any one time.

"I love it," said Van Thai-Dang of Rohnert Park. "My kids have been waiting for this day for so long. It is fantastic, it is big, it is easy to find books."

The library has about 60,000 books, with room for about 100,000, plus 15 PCs with Internet access and a staff of 11.

"It is very exciting," said Kathy Dennison, the branch librarian. "This is the only new library I've opened in my 25 years."

The library theme is carried on outside the building, with a walkway full of words to construct poetry, a tile wall dedicated to the history of communication, a tile wall for the alphabet, a concrete monument to the world's first library in Alexandria, Egypt, which burned in 84 BC, and concrete sculptures on book stacks.

It is located next to the Rohnert Park police department and in a complex where the city also hopes to build a new City Hall.

The library was a community effort, with the library foundation raising about \$40,000 for some of the furnishings and the Friends of the Library donating \$70,000 in the past two years for new books and special programs.

Foundation board member John Dell'Osso said the foundation will also be involved in raising funds for a second-floor expansion in 15 to 20 years.

The library also has a used bookstore for the Friends of the Library, which since 1976, when the old library was constructed, has donated \$261,000 for books and materials.

"This is something that we have looked forward to," said Joan Schmutz of Penngrove, a charter member of the Friends.

You can reach Staff Writer Bob Norberg at 521-5206 or bnorberg@pressdemocrat.com.



The Press Democrat