

The Arnett Branch Library
1923-2023

A Look Back at Our First 100 Years



Rochester Public Library
ARNETT BRANCH



More Than You Think

The Arnett Branch serves as an anchor in the social infrastructure of the 19th Ward community. Led by the incomparable Bruce Tehan, Arnett has flourished in the 21st century, becoming a safe haven for youth, a place where lifelong learning is supported and encouraged, and a place where new friendships form and people engage in civil discourse every day.

Libraries bring people together. People who are very different from each other come together and become part of a community. They very likely have differing political and religious views, support different sports teams, watch different television shows, or read different kinds of book. The *place* brings them together, and that is what makes the Arnett Branch so special.

Over the years, Bruce and his staff have worked hard to make the library a special part of the community. It has grown from a very traditional 20th century library into a bustling place full of laughter and curiosity that also happens to have books, computers, and staff who greet you by name and rarely “shush” you!

The library provides a safe space for children to gather after school where they are supervised, often fed, and given homework assistance until picked up by their parents after work is done for the day. Adults can apply for jobs or participate in a writing group. Teens learn about college and work opportunities. All ages come to play.

Arnett has been transformed inside and out, but especially on the outside where it has become one of the most popular locations for visiting public art in Rochester. Local artists Richmond Futch, Ebony Singleton, and Chloe Smith have created beautiful murals on the exterior of the library, which only reinforce the role of the library as a community anchor and has made the library a selfie destination. The “book spine” murals on the exterior of the building, while colorful and beautifully rendered, only hint at the wonders to be found within. 19th Ward residents, iykyk!

**Patricia Uttaro, Director of the Rochester Public Library
and the Monroe County Library System**



1923-2023

A library for the community.

A library that cares for the neighborhood.

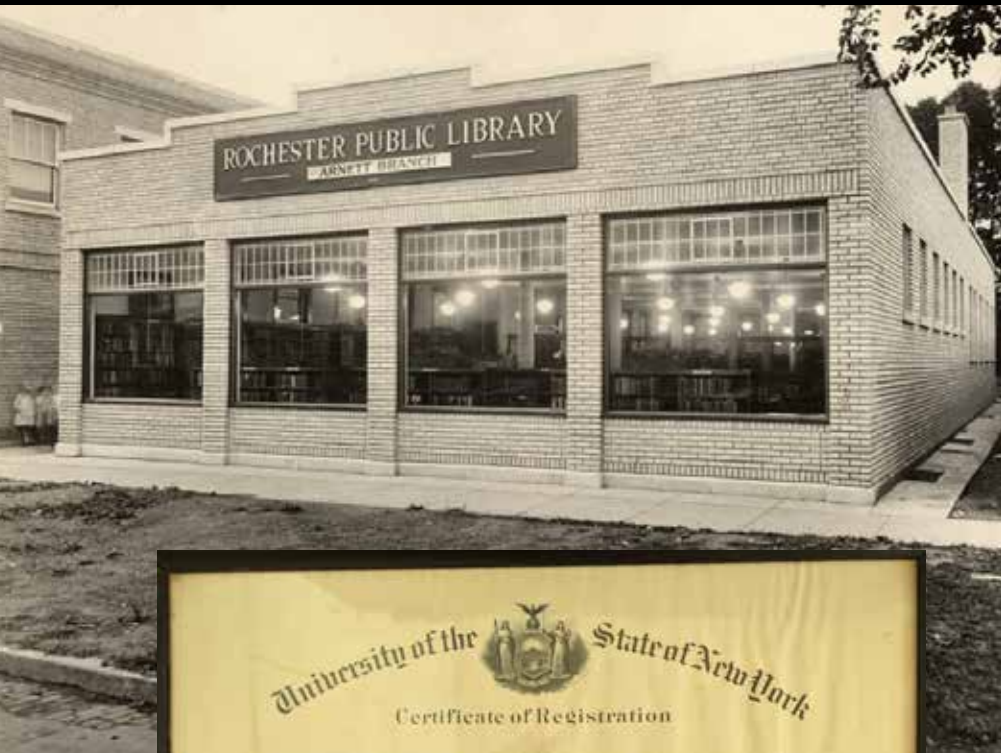
A community that cares for the library.



In 1996 our community established the Helen Martin Memorial Living Classroom of NY State Plants. It has been designed and maintained by volunteers including Jerry Bond, Joanne DeMarle, Joy Vanding, Dorothy Ramsey, and Jay and Dan Ross. Fellow library friends like Susan and Bill Morehouse care for our front-facing flower garden. The Arnett Block Association cares for the fabulous butterfly garden next door.

This is just one of the many examples of caring for our community.

September 1923



The Arnett Branch of the Rochester Public Library opened in September 1923 and received its New York State registration in March 1924. Prior to shelves and books being added to the building, neighbors gathered for a dance and reception celebrating the new building.



Located at 310 Arnett Boulevard, the building was rented by the City of Rochester to serve as a library. The adult area was located at the front of the building near the large storefront style windows.



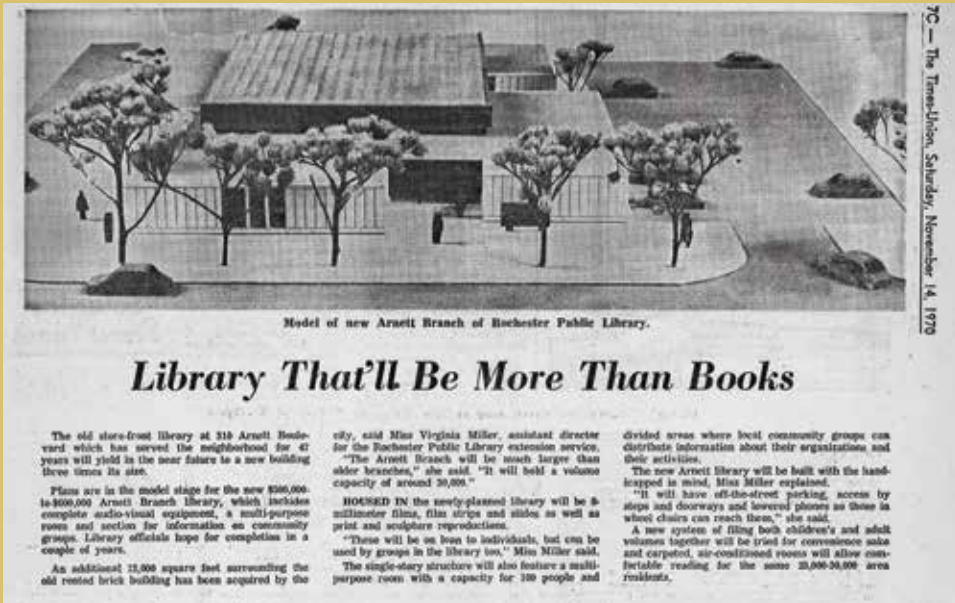
The Children's Area



The spacious children's section was located in the rear of the building.



Planning for a New Building ~ 1960's



In the late 1960's planning began to move the library into a new building. Following the razing of the original building, the library's new structure was erected and opened in 1973 at the same address, 310 Arnett Boulevard.

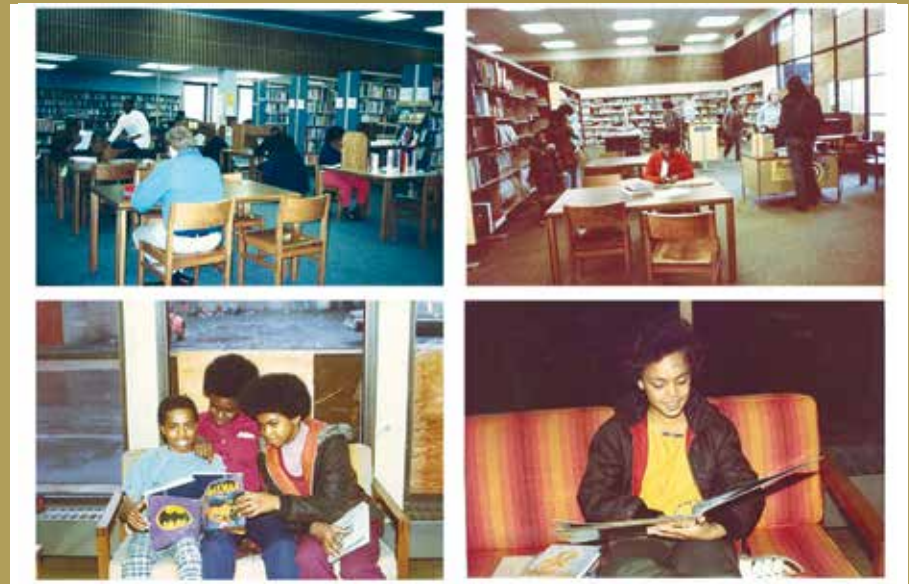


Finished in 1973



Construction of the new building was funded by the New York State Education Department and the City of Rochester, NY. Branch Manager Stella Campbell (Foote) and Rochester Public Library Director Harold Hacker led this endeavor. The building was designed to be well suited for community activities.

During the 1970's the new building continued to be a reading center for the 19th Ward community.



1983 ~ 10 years in the new building



In 1983 Branch Manager Maria Lucarelli, volunteers, library workers and community friends celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the new building.

The Assembly State of New York



Citation



Whereas, In the year nineteen hundred eighty four, the staff of Arnett Branch Library was named Merchant of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Under the supervision of Maria Lucarelli the staff of the Arnett Branch Library has worked very hard over the past few years to create a pleasant atmosphere for those individuals using the library.

Whereas, The friendly attitude and willingness to help serve the community has contributed to the very positive community reaction.

Resolved, That a copy of this Citation, suitably engrossed be transmitted to the staff of the Arnett Branch Library.

May 5, 1984

[Date]

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my Hand and Signature

and J. Lant
Member of The Assembly

In 1984 the Arnett Branch Library received awards and commendations from the 19th Ward Association, the City of Rochester, and the Monroe County Legislature sharing the sentiments of this citation from the NYS Assembly.

In 2006 Assemblyman David Gantt helped the director of Rochester Public Library's *Safe to Be Smart* Program (STBS), Derrick Coley (Mr. C.), and neighborhood youth open the new Teen Spot! STBS, designed to foster positive growth and development in our youth was developed in 2001 through Mr. C's leadership, a council of neighborhood teens and funds from the Halcyon Hill Foundation, in memory of Library Trustee George R. Parsons Jr.



From 2010 to 2015 Arnett Volunteers, led by Susan Morehouse (pictured here) and Richmond Futch whose artistry adorns the library, engaged in several projects to make the library more attractive.



In 2010 the Arnett Branch Library was awarded an energy conservation project grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority for the installation of a 50kW photovoltaic energy system. This system contributes to the library's annual electricity needs with clean, renewable solar energy.



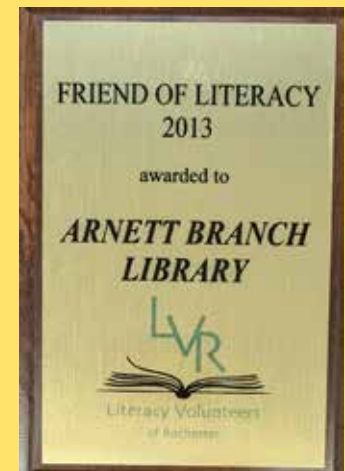
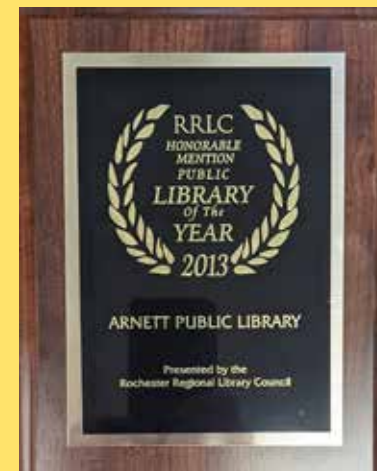
In 2011 The Reptile Guy (far left) introduced staff members (left to right) Tiffany Harris, Branch Manager Deb Leary, Jean Slocombe, Chimere Jackson, and Patrick McAvinney to a new friend.



Volunteer Jennifer Allen is seen here sharing stories with young patrons.



LEGO Club roared to life in 2011 and has been going strong ever since.




2013 The Rochester Regional Library Council and the Literacy Volunteers of Rochester do wonderful things for our community. The library received recognition by both organizations for our efforts to promote literacy and a love of reading.

Summer Reading and Holiday Celebrations






Throughout the years kids and their grownups loved our summer reading and holiday celebrations!

The 19th Ward Community Association has been a dear friend to the library in so many ways. The Martin Luther King celebrations sponsored by the Association are among the library's most popular programs.




Martin Luther King Jr.
Celebration with
19th Ward Community Association &
Arnett Library Branch Music Series
Saturday, January 18, 2020



KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE

Martin Luther King Jr.
Celebration
January 18, 2020
at 12n Arnett Library



Key Note Speaker

Belle Scott
The Honorable Belle H. Scott, first person of color elected to serve on Rochester City Council (1977-1989) and its 1989-1990 as the country's first African American President and also because she is a 19th Ward Community Association member.

New Life Ministries Choir

19th Ward Kids Choir

Martin Luther King Luminary Evening

Monday, January 20, 2020
19th Ward Light Up the Night
Neighbors light up the night with
Luminaries in honor of Dr. King
6pm-8pm

The 15th year of the 19th Ward's Martin Luther King Luminary Event is right around the corner and this year we want to make it better than ever! We are calling on churches, businesses, neighbors, and social clubs in the 19th ward and throughout the Southside Quadant to join us in celebrating the life of one of America's greatest cultural icons. Please go to our website for hot spot locations and how to make an luminary.

- What's a Hot Spot? Hot Spots are locations set up throughout the community where you can meet other neighbors and celebrate the memory of Dr. King. Most Hot Spots offer hot chocolate and cookies!
- Why do we do this? We light up our neighborhood with luminaries, banners and flags to express our solidarity with the values of Martin Luther King's Beloved Community and his important campaigns against racism, poverty and militarism.

19thWard.org or call the office at 565-328-6571

The Arnett Branch Library Friends have facilitated a myriad of wonderful programs for the library including their Winter Spring Music Series, featuring brilliantly talented local artists like the Eastman Pathways Musicians and Ben Krug and Grace Browning Duo (seen below), who give us the gift of their music.



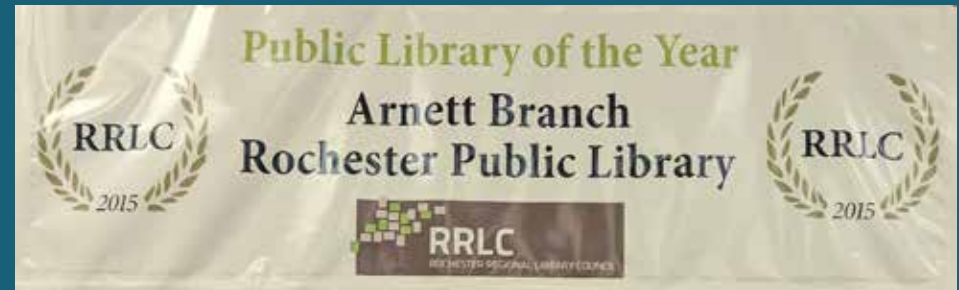
The bonds between library workers and patrons can last for decades as can be seen in this 2016 picture of retired manager Jean Verno, and lifelong patrons Violet Keating and her daughter Karen Dagostino, and also in the 2018 picture below of Library Assistant Shetora Banks with several prize-winning summer readers.



In 2015 with the help of Rochester Regional Library Council, the Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library, R-Community Bikes, and the Rochester Public Library's Graphics and Maintenance Divisions, *Books By Bike* hit the streets. This mobile library has been rolling along ever since, as the kids visiting with Whitney Davidson-Rhodes, Bruce Wilbur and Katie Powell can attest.



Library of the Year



In 2015 the Arnett Branch Library Community was named *Library of the Year* by the Rochester Regional Library Council: Of the Arnett Branch they said: "This was a difficult choice as there were so many positive reviews of so many different libraries. But what makes the Arnett Branch stand out is that the people in its community see it as integral to the community and a critical part of the heart of the 19th Ward. Nominators list many examples of how the library and its staff are out and about in the community and how they go above and beyond the normal."

One of the many examples of nominations (it was so hard to pick just one!) said: "*This is truly a neighborhood library, with outreach to the diverse population in our corner of the city. There are storytimes, homework help, LEGO club, a teen center, live music events, computer resources, literacy volunteers, and of course, books to read, reference help, DVDs and music. Most of all, there is a staff of helpful and welcoming librarians. The library even has a table at our local farmer's market and Square Fair. Over the twenty-plus years I have lived in this neighborhood, I have never seen the library more vital and active and utilized...*"

Staff in 2015 included: Bruce Tehan, Branch Manager; Elizabeth Jakubowski, Whitney Rhodes-Davidson, Ceola Bacot, Linda Smith, Sean Greif, Bruce Wilbur, Prudence Anderson-Leusch, Leesah Zink, Mary Santiago, and Patrick McAvinney.

The Arnett Branch continues to get rave reviews from patrons.



Artists young and old have found inspiration at the library. Pictured at left is Richmond Futch mapping out some of the places a library can take you and some young artists are blooming with Prudence Anderson-Leusch (Ms. P.) below.



Teen Successes



Be they swashbuckling with the Rochester Fencing Club or preparing for their high school graduation like Alicea Nieves (2014) and Fartun Hussein (2018), library teens have had great successes.



From 2017 –2021

Three stellar artists, Ebony Singleton, Chloe Smith, and Richmond Futch transformed the outside of our building into a beautiful work of art featuring books beloved by our 19th Ward community. Generous donors, including the Violet Keating family, City of Rochester, Rochester Public Library and Friends & Foundation of RPL, provided the funds to make this artwork.



When the COVID-19 situation began, the Arnett Branch Library strove to continue serving its community. One such effort was a very popular youth book give-away program led by the First Tuesday Book Club. The project began in 2020 and has continued each winter. For all their efforts during these difficult times Rochester Public Library sites were honored by the City of Rochester.

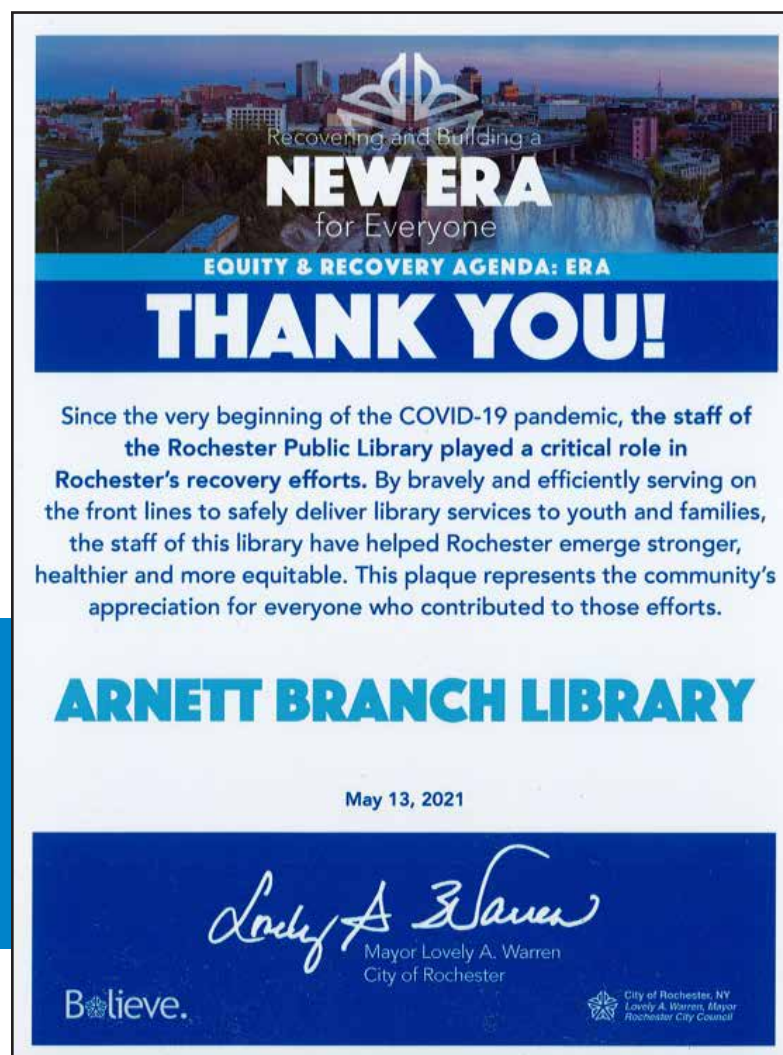




Photo by Margy Meath

Branch Manager, Bruce Tehan invited the community for a group photo. On February 7, 2023, Mayor Malik Evans joined library staff and patrons to commemorate 100 years of the Arnett Branch of the Rochester Public Library.



Sources

In assembling the text and photographs for this booklet several resources were used including:

"Digital Collections." Rochester Public Library, <https://roccitylibrary.org/digital-collections>
Accessed 30 December 2022.

"NEWS RELEASE - CITY TO RECEIVE STIMULUS FUNDS FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION." City of Rochester, 22 March 2010, <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.asp?id=8589941979>

Uttaro, Patricia. "From One Branch Sprouts Many: Celebrating 100 Years of the People's University." *Rochester History*, Spring 2011, pp. 1-23

Rochester Public Library: 100 Years of Service 1911-2011
Rochester Public Library, 2011

This book was designed by Corinne Clar, Graphics Department of the Rochester Public Library.



City of Rochester, NY
Malik D. Evans, Mayor
Rochester City Council



Friends & Foundation of the
Rochester Public Library



Rochester
Public Library

More Than You Think

