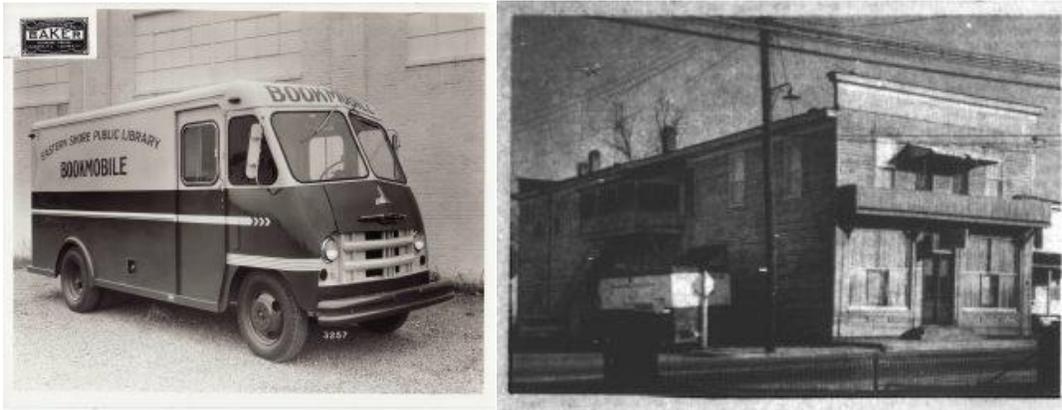


## EASTERN SHORE PUBLIC LIBRARY CELEBRATES 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



(Accomac, Virginia) October 17, 2018 – 1958 was a hallmark year on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The Shore saw the opening of a new Accomack County Health Department facility in Accomac, WESR coming on air, and the dedication of Chincoteague’s new high school. Construction projects were beginning with the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (\$137 million), Wallops Island space launch facility (\$24 million), and a new library (\$60,000). That year Northampton and Accomack Counties formed a new Eastern Shore Public Library regional library system still in operation today and the library Board of Trustees and staff and the ESPL Foundation are celebrating.

The Eastern Shore Public Library (ESPL) was started as a demonstration project in 1957 by the Commonwealth of Virginia. It was located in the Town of Accomac’s Community Hall. Proving itself successful, the two counties voted in the spring of 1958 to create a regional system with both counties sharing in the costs of its operation. This was not the first library on the Eastern Shore. Cape Charles Memorial Library, formerly Northampton Memorial Library, started in 1919 and will be celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. Other smaller libraries operated for short periods near Exmore and in Parksley and Chincoteague. This new library would be organized as a governmental agency under the auspices of the Library of Virginia. Many counties in Virginia have county or city municipal libraries, but areas with smaller populations have “regional” libraries. The regional, county and municipal libraries receive funding from the state and their local municipalities.

Over the years, ESPL has grown and changed with the community, technology, and the publishing industry. In 1965, after eight years of fundraising, the current library building in Accomac opened, relocating from a storefront on Front Street. Further fundraising provided an addition in 1984 which added a children’s room and the Eastern Shore Room. The bookmobile arrived in 1971 bringing books to the small towns up and down the Shore. Cape Charles joined the system in 1979 creating a formal resource sharing agreement. Chincoteague Island Library opened in 1995 followed by Northampton Free Library in Nassawadox in 2006 .

Sixty years of growth included the advent of technology in libraries. Card catalogs became automated. Books became available on cassette, online, and other formats. Movies became a circulating format with DVDs. Public computers became available with Internet

access making a world of information available to every citizen. These technology changes required shifts in space and budget allocation. Staff that previously typed catalog cards learned to help visitors use the computer. Every library has become crammed to meet the growing space needs of technology. Additionally, organizations and individuals increasingly need public meeting space for collaboration and learning. The ESPL Foundation was formed in 2009 to raise money to help meet the changing needs of each of the four libraries on the Shore.

ESPL is celebrating its anniversary in a variety of ways. Library staff are currently collecting library memories to be archived in the new Eastern Shore of Virginia Heritage Center in the new regional library. Memories, like this one of library chairperson Jackie Davis:

*“One of my many fond childhood memories is of my mom and me walking to the Eastern Shore Public Library book mobile in Quinby. My parents and I moved to the Eastern Shore in 1976 from the Northern Virginia area. My mother did not drive so having the convenience to walk to a library on wheels was very special. We would select our books and take them home to put in a wooden bookcase that my father built and to this day the bookcase has a special place in my home.”*

The focus of the ESPL Board of Trustees and the ESPL Foundation has been to raise funds for a \$5 million regional library to be built in Parksley. These volunteers feel this is the best way to celebrate sixty years of service to the community by ensuring the resources are available for the next sixty years. They follow over fifty Board of Trustees that have volunteered since 1958 to secure funding for vibrant programs and support for lifelong learning.

A variety of celebrations have been taking place this year. At the start of 2018, a fine amnesty took place to start the new year with a clean slate and encourage cardholders to use the library. In September, the ESPL Foundation held a reception for current trustees and staff. ESPL created a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary library history booklet which is available at each of the four Shore libraries, while supplies last. The Friends of ESPL are celebrating their own 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a party on October 23 from 2:00 to 8:00 pm at the Accomac location with a special book sale, cake, and activities.

A children’s “Happy Birthday, Eastern Shore Public Library!” party will take place on Saturday, November 10, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Children will celebrate the library’s birthday with games, crafts, cake and refreshments. The event is free, but please pre-register by phone at (757) 787-3400 or email [youthservices@espl.org](mailto:youthservices@espl.org).

To donate your Eastern Shore of Virginia library memory or photographs to the archives, you can email it to [espl@espl.org](mailto:espl@espl.org), drop a printed copy or audio or visual recording off at any of the library locations, or mail it to ESPL, PO Box 360, Accomac, VA 23301. By donating the memory, it is understood the donor allows the library to reproduce it in print form, on the library’s web page, or on social media (Facebook). For questions, call (757) 787-3400. To learn more, visit the ESPL website at [www.espl.org](http://www.espl.org). To learn about the library’s construction project or to donate, visit [www.shorelibrary.com](http://www.shorelibrary.com).

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