



# PARTNERSHIPS AS PATHWAYS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## A VILLAGE LIBRARY STORY

MICHELLE BROWN, MLS  
LIBRARY DIRECTOR BROCKWAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY  
MIAMI SHORES, FLORIDA

**"Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much."**

**Helen Keller**

Since 1949, Brockway Memorial Library has been serving Miami Shores Village, a suburban hamlet situated just north of downtown Miami, yet distinctively unique for its proximity to Biscayne Bay, its lush tree canopy, and its small-town vibe. Built at the onset thanks to a generous bestowal of \$50,000 by philanthropist and truck manufacturer, George A. Brockway, and a donation of the land on which it sits by Bessemer Properties, the library has had community spirit in its roots from the start. In fact, the initial collection consisted of 4,182 volumes, composed of books donated by individual residents and civic organizations, such as the Miami Shores Woman's Club, Rotary, and the Miami Shores Optimist Club.

Over the years, local organizations, schools, professionals, and business owners have sought to partner with the library as an avenue for outreach. With a shared desire to bring the public together for a common purpose, the results of these collaborations have been exponentially beneficial to all parties. With an open mindset, the library has been able to offer a variety of stellar programming for both adults and youth with community groups from all backgrounds.



Master Gardener Workshop

From the arts, entities such as the Miami Theater Center, the North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art, the Miami Shores Fine Arts Commission, and the Miami Art League, have all created opportunities for the library to serve as an avenue for experiencing music, art, poetry, dance, and photography. From environmental groups, such as the Miami Seed Share and Bound by Beauty, patrons have learned about native gardening and have been given the tools to work, live, and play more sustainably. Groups with a focus on history and preservation, such as the Miami Shores Historic Preservation Board and HistoryMiami Museum, as well as local tour guides and resident historians, have led to a community passion for local history that earned Miami Shores Village a Florida League of Cities 2022 Florida Citizenship Award. STEM-focused (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) partners, like the Frost Museum, have enthralled and educated our youngest patrons to excite their interest in these important subjects. Business-minded collaborators like the Chamber of Commerce and the Village's own Small-Business Development groups are helping our local business owners find a niche in our growing downtown corridor. And the list goes on!



Master Gardener Workshop

## Partnerships as Pathways to Community Engagement

Health and wellness with our neighborhood physicians and fitness instructors, lifelong learning with our local universities, and non-profit organizations with a social mission, like the South Florida People of Color, are all working together to better our community, and the library resides at the heart of it.

Brockway Memorial Library provides services to a municipality of just over 11,000 residents. With a burgeoning patronage of young families and new neighbors, as well as a large number of retirees and senior citizens, there is a strong demand for offerings geared toward these various age groups, and a new interest on the library's part to provide programming that ties them all together in what we call intergenerational offerings. The latter has been very well-received and has been simple to accomplish in the forms of walking history tours, family game nights, and a particularly strong program, Senior Tech Connect, founded by Nicolas Jachtchenco, a high school student who recognized the difficulties his grandmothers had with technology and figured that other seniors were having similar issues. His mission is to improve the quality of life of senior citizens by breaking down technology and age barriers by giving them the skills they need to access today's digitally-driven world. The dynamic between the age groups is wonderfully uplifting! What started as a one-time program, now recurs monthly.

Like all libraries in this Digital Age, we have had to evolve in order to meet the changing needs of today's users. Community partnerships have been one way that our library has been able to stay vibrant and valued. What's more, we've been able to host innovative offerings beyond what we ourselves, as a small staff of 10, could have managed on our own. Programs like these also allow us to tie real-world, current interests and needs into our other materials, both in the physical and digital collections, exposing the public to resources that they may not have been aware of. Most significantly, these partnerships and resulting offerings have connected our library patrons to one another, creating a strong sense of community. They have solidified the public's opinion of the library as a trusted gateway providing opportunities for literacy, learning, and access to information - all elements of our mission statement.

As our Village Library celebrates its 75th Anniversary this year, we recognize the many wonderful people and colleagues who have shared their knowledge, passion, and time to help us provide meaningful and impactful programming to our patrons—most often at little to no cost to us. They have made an invaluable difference to those we serve, and have enabled the library to remain a place of purpose, engagement, and refuge for today's citizens. How wonderful is that?



Shoreland Mansions Tour



Senior Tech Connect