

Leesburg Public Library offers Lake County residents lifelong learning opportunities about politics, women in history, the future of Florida's environment and more.

By BREA JONES
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Libraries are meant for more than just books.

The team at the Leesburg Public Library work to provide lifelong learning opportunities by scheduling meaningful and educational programs that benefit Lake County residents.

"(The programs) are relevant to today and relevant to the wishes of the patrons," said Deborah Bussinger, library program coordinator for Leesburg Public Library. "Patrons have a strong appetite for Florida history."

Over the course of two months, more than 3,000 people visited the "Voices and Votes: Democracy in America" Smithsonian Exhibition, which was on display at the library from November to Jan. 11. Exploring America's 250-year-old history, the exhibition is an example of the educational programs the library offers.

From a series that highlights how women have impacted

history to lessons on Florida's environment, there are plenty of educational events lined up to start 2025 at Leesburg Public Library, 100 E. Main St., Leesburg.

Learn About Influential Women

The legacy and impact of certain women throughout history will never be lost in time because of exhibits like the "Exceptional Women Series."

"We, as a society, have traditionally not given credit to women who are influential," Bussinger said.

To help change tradition and remind people of influential women, the library held the "Lou Hoover, First Lady: Exceptional Woman Series" program from 1 to 2 p.m. on Jan. 11.

Prior to becoming the first lady in 1929, Hoover traveled to and lived in China, helped relief efforts during World War I and supported suffrage rights.

The local chapter of the League of Women Voters of The Villages Tri-County, a nonpartisan, nonprofit



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Deborah Bussinger, library program coordinator for the Leesburg Public Library, stands next to her favorite portion of the "Voices and Votes: Democracy in America" Smithsonian Exhibition.

organization, created the series and Lisa French, a speaker within the Speaker Bureau at the League of Women Voters, led the program.

Bussinger said the information-sharing series has helped her and others learn about women who impacted society, including educator and activist Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune.

"I'm thinking to myself, we didn't learn about her in school," she said. "Now, I have."

Parsing Fact from Fiction

Giving others the chance to learn information they didn't learn in school, the Leesburg Public Library will host Gail Formanack, another speaker within the LWV Speaker Bureau, as she leads the "Separating Fact from Fiction - News Sources" program.

During the program, locals will learn the basics of understanding and fact-checking media from 1 to 2 p.m. on Jan. 25.

The program comes weeks after Mark Zuckerberg, owner

of Meta, announced the end of fact-checking on Facebook and Instagram in favor of community notes on Jan. 7.

"It's on everybody's mind — how to search for news that is truthful," Bussinger said.

Encouraging readers to be

curious about the information they consume, the presentation will review how to find and use accountable and accurate news sources.

The presentation will explain bias charts for new organizations, how consumers looking at news can check their own bias, and how to share accurate news with others.

Registration for the program is required and can be completed online at mylake.library.org.

Find Out About Florida's Environment With Florida Humanities

With changes in sea level, population growth and other factors, Florida's landscape continues to change.

People will be able to learn about those changes through the "Florida's Environment Series with Florida Humanities"

programs at the library.

Environmental experts will host three upcoming programs on the library's calendar in partnership with the Florida Humanities, a non-profit focused on sharing and preserving Florida's history.

During the "Sea Level Rise and Heritage Sites in Florida" program from 1 to 2 p.m. Jan. 31, professor Dr. Uzi Baram will discuss how changing weather patterns, larger storms, and rising sea levels are challenging Florida's landscape.

There are options register for the program in-person or online.

The series will also have the "The Future of Florida's Coasts" program from 1 to 2 p.m. Feb. 28, and the "Tracing Florida's Journeys" from 1 to 2 p.m. March. 21.

To register for the programs, which is required, visit mylake.library.org.