



# ANNUAL REPORT

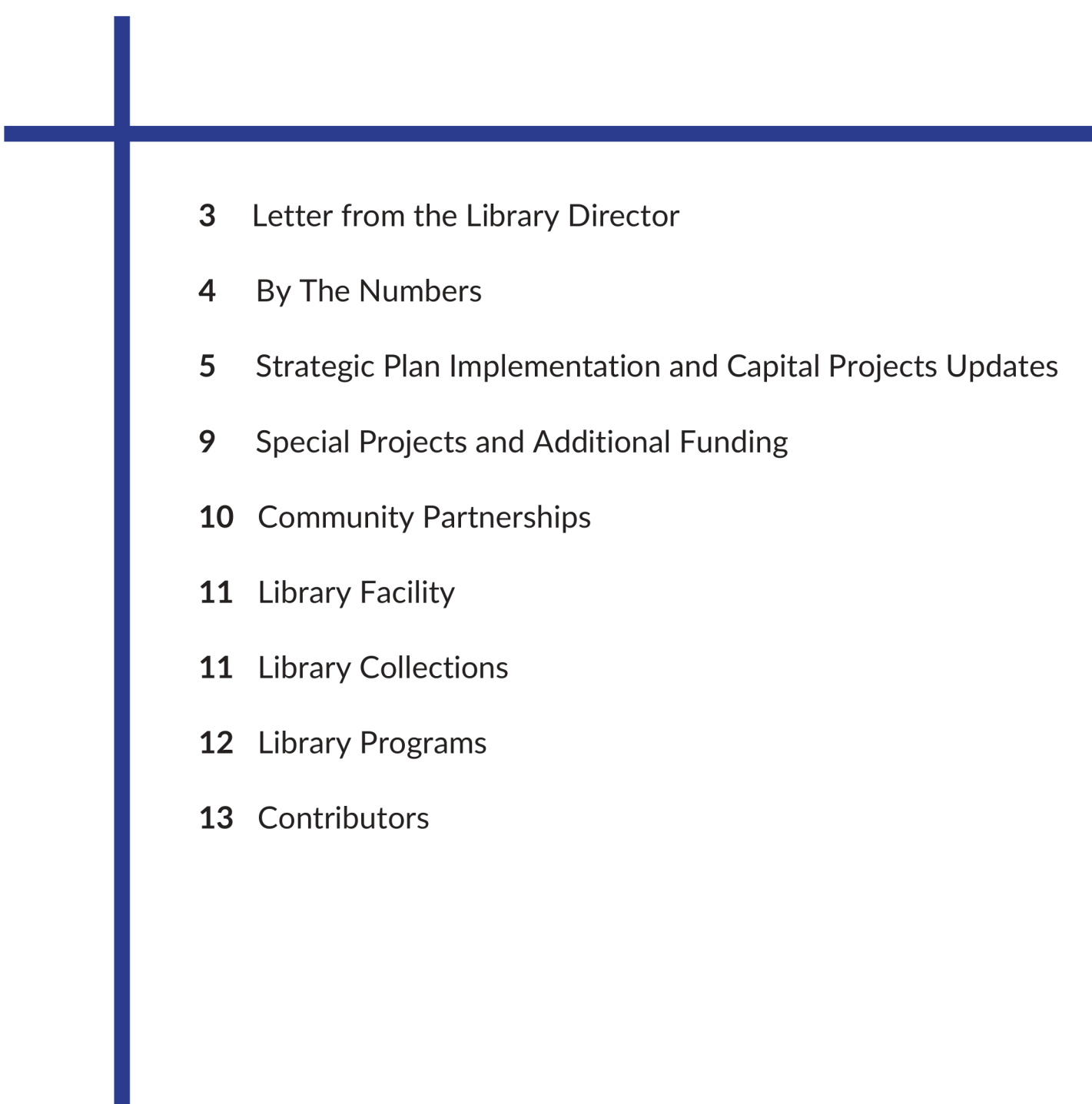
**Fiscal Year 2022-2023**



**SIMI VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

2969 Tapo Canyon Rd, Simi Valley, CA 93063 | (805) 526-1735 | [simivalleylibrary.org](http://simivalleylibrary.org)

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# Letter from the Library Director

This year, Simi Valley Public Library and all its spaces were in high demand. From serving as a meeting place for non-profits, clubs, businesses, and other organizations to providing unofficial gathering space in the Teen Lounge and Rose Garden, several rooms in the Library were reserved and used throughout the year. Patrons found locating quiet room to work difficult and other challenges involved finding available space for large groups of teens to gather to study and do homework. The need for future space planning for the Library was clear.

Students, families, and educators from Simi Valley Unified School District benefitted from Library Outreach. School District Library Staff attended an Open House for an informal reception to meet public Library Staff. The interactive evening event featured appetizers, door prizes, and cookies from Skiff's Bakery, a local favorite. The Friends of the Library gave guests books for their school libraries. 11 schools participated in 'Meet [Me] at the Library' this year and the program's success was shared at the American Library Association's (ALA) annual conference.

The City of Simi Valley expanded their contract with Library Systems & Services to begin Mobile Library and Adult Literacy programs in the upcoming year. These new programs will address service gaps in the changing and evolving community and the Mobile Library will take impactful materials and programs to people who cannot easily get to the Library. Literacy is a core mission for Simi Valley Public Library, and the new Adult Literacy service will complement the early literacy, homework assistance, family learning, and workforce support programs offered at the Library. New Staff positions will be added to provide Mobile Library and Adult Literacy services.

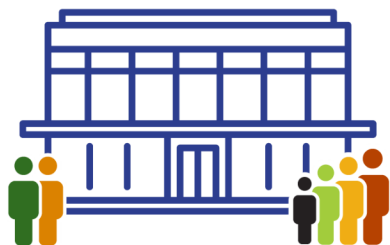
The increases in Library usage during Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023 and the plans for new services and a building renovation are just a few reasons to be excited for the future of our Library!

**Kelly Behle | Director**





# BY THE NUMBERS



**142,731**

LIBRARY VISITS



**2,887**

PUBLIC SERVICE  
HOURS



**10,846**

USES OF PUBLIC  
INTERNET COMPUTERS



**190,660**

WIRELESS  
SESSIONS



**71,419**

TOTAL CIRCULATION -  
ELECTRONIC MATERIALS



**341,517**

TOTAL CIRCULATION -  
PHYSICAL MATERIALS



**4,213**

NEW BORROWERS



**34,959**

REGISTERED  
BORROWERS

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**FISCAL YEAR**

2022-2023

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# Strategic Plan Implementation and Capital Projects Updates

Implementation of the new five-year strategic plan began during FY2022-2023, with notable successes in each of the four priority areas:

**BUILD COMMUNITY**

**CONNECT AND  
INCREASE ACCESS**

**ENHANCE SERVICES**

**BUILD AWARENESS**

## **Build Community:**

*Build a stronger community through Library services.*

This priority area includes improving access to workforce development opportunities, connecting job-seekers to employers, and equipping the community to learn new skills.

The Library's position as a partner organization for job fairs strengthened this year. Partnering with the Simi Valley Youth Employment Services and the Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Job Fair provided a great opportunity for community members of all ages to not just learn about potential career paths but to speak directly to potential employers. Attendees also gained important job skills including interviewing and resume-building. This was the second Job Fair at the Library, and attendance grew to 700 this year.

A series of workshops created to teach teens the basics of money management, investment, credit, and savings allowed local experts and partners as well as teen entrepreneurs who put these principles into practice the opportunity to showcase important business and investment skills.

In August, 30 participants attended 'Best Practices - Starting Your Own Business by Buying One,'- a business development program offered as part of an ongoing partnership with Ventura County SCORE. Topics included credit, funding, valuation, and return on investment.



Local experts taught hands-on practical tasks through a partnership with the Master Gardeners of Ventura County. The first class, 'Drought Tolerant Gardening and Maintenance,' garnered a highly-engaged audience who later complimented guest speaker Laura Passetta, another expert with an informative and entertaining presentation. The partnership and its presentations were so well-received that the program has been expanded into a monthly series. Participants learned practical skills for at-home use, from designing fire-safe gardens to growing tomatoes, and attendees appreciated the opportunity to meet fellow gardeners.

Rising community interest in chess led patrons of all ages to learn new skills via a monthly Teen Chess Club, expanded to twice a month, and an added Children's Chess Club and Adult Chess Club. The five Chess programs gave participants the opportunity to both teach and learn from one another.



In June, historian and author P. Scott Corbett spoke about the experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II, both in internment camps and as soldiers in the United States military. Attendees included World War II buffs, Asian-American issues enthusiasts, and, notably, one man who was himself incarcerated in an internment camp as a child. The former prisoner brought along an album of photos from the camp, which he shared with Professor Corbett and several interested audience members after the presentation. The program facilitated incredible connections between community members.

## Connect and Increase Access:

**Connect community members to each other and to their Library.**

Strategic priorities in this section include making services more accessible to everyone and creating a comfortable space for modern library users.

Library hours were extended to include Friday mornings for customers' convenience.

Plans were made for an upcoming Mobile Library service to increase access for people who cannot easily get to the Library and meet patrons where they are. The need for a dedicated vehicle was clear this past year as Staff continued to drive personal vehicles to Outreach sites. The Boys and Girls Club was visited regularly, giving kids an opportunity to check out materials. Staff noticed that when those individuals do have the opportunity to visit the facility, they're excited to see familiar faces.

The interactive Library Unlimited program for adults with adaptive needs showcased relevant Library resources and provided engaging activities to encourage connection and community in FY2022-2023. One-one-one tours were offered to help these adults find items they want to borrow.

Simi Valley Public Library made progress toward improving functionality and comfort of the facility to make the Library a destination spot that meets the needs of groups and individuals. As a designated cooling center, the Library installed a generator to ensure uninterrupted power to the building during heat emergencies. This improvement will keep the building operational during Public Safety Power Shutoffs and other power outages. In FY2022-2023, the City of Simi Valley was also awarded funds from the Building Forward Infrastructure Grant through the California State Library for further electrical upgrades. As part of the larger scale renovation, the upgrade will increase power capacity to the building and include additional outlets and charging stations for patrons' devices.

The City of Simi Valley also applied for the second round of Building Forward Infrastructure Grant funds to address other critical safety and maintenance needs. If funded, the pending grant will allow for installation of new shelving to comply with current earthquake standards. Smart board technology and video recording equipment will also be included in renovation plans for a modern Teen Center. The application also requests funds for updated audiovisual equipment in the Community Room, a high-demand space where updated equipment is needed for hosting hybrid meetings, livestreamed events, and podcasting opportunities.

## Enhance Services:

*Serve the diverse community through excellent Library services.*

Goals for enhanced services include developing a community-needs based collection, improving program offerings for all ages, and creating opportunities for teens to connect with each other.

Throughout the year, the Teen Advisory Group (TAG) began a successful TAG Picks collection display area. The books chosen for display were popular with other teens, and items were quickly checked out. Throughout the Library, Staff created other thematic and seasonal displays of books to draw patrons' attention.



Multicultural Storytime began in September, featuring guest readers and Staff who read in a language other than English or read a folktale from a variety of cultural traditions. Children attending this weekly program have been exposed to stories in the cadences of several languages and heard a wide range of folktales from around the world. Guest readers find value in sharing their heritage with the community.

In June, the Library began offering a bi-monthly English Conversation Group to help English language learners practice their skills and gain confidence. Community partners Buen Vecino and the Free Clinic of Simi Valley were enlisted to help promote the new program among their users. The first attendees included a family of three who recently immigrated from Thailand and were eager for opportunities to practice their English. Participants from South America reported that the group is helpful in reaching their English language goals.



***Benefit the full community by building awareness of Library services.***

Priorities for this strategic area involve making new and existing residents aware of services and branding the Library as a destination for connecting with the community.

The Library launched an eNewsletter in October 2022 to increase awareness of Library services. The newsletter contains monthly highlights, promotes the Friends of the Library, and includes a monthly calendar; it is currently up to 260 subscribers and is available for download on the website. Physical printouts also continue to be in high demand with patrons.

# Special Projects and Additional Funding



Zip Book funds (\$6,000) were awarded by the California State Library and used for the purchase of books and DVDs requested by Library users. The items are ordered through Amazon, delivered to the patron's home, and added to the Library collection for other users to enjoy.

Lunch at the Library funds (\$5,000) were used to buy project supplies for Eat, Learn, Play programs and summer lunchtime site visits to the Boys and Girls Club. The grant funds also covered the cost of books given to children and teens for their home libraries.

The City of Simi Valley was awarded \$350,000 from the California State Library for the Building Forward Infrastructure Grant project to be used to update the Library's electrical system.

Simi Valley Public Library applied for California Library Literacy Services in FY2022-2023, and \$85,000 will be funded in the upcoming year. These funds will enhance services and offset the costs of the Adult Literacy and English as Second Language program that were approved by the Library Board of Trustees.

Community Project Grant funds were received by the Friends of the Library from the City of Simi Valley. The \$10,000 grant allows for the purchase of a dedicated opening day collection for the Mobile Library.

Cindy Slack, a local businesswoman and Library advocate, proposed the incorporation of a Simi Valley Public Library Foundation to raise funds for special projects, spearhead capital campaigns, and offer planned giving opportunities. Charter board officers were recruited during the spring of 2023 and the Foundation looks forward to expanding the board once incorporation is completed. Special projects will include a capital campaign with naming opportunities for the renovated Teen Space or collaborative work center.

# Community Partnerships

The Rock Painting Night the Library hosts alongside the Simi Valley Youth Council is one of the largest annual teen-focused programs. The event outgrew the Rose Garden and was held in the Civic Center, where over 300 attendees participated. Rock Painting Night advocates for teen mental health and wellness, an issue that Simi Valley teens say is a critical priority.

Wildfires are an ongoing concern for Simi Valley residents. To help connect the community to the resources and information available to them, the Library partnered with the Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative to host a Wild Fire Town Hall for both Simi Valley and Moorpark. The event began with a resource fair with representatives from Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council, Ventura County Resource Conservation District, Ventura County Fire Department, Southern California Edison, Ventura County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services, and City of Simi Valley leaders. The community learned about wildfire prevention and preparedness and their questions were answered by experts.

The Read Across America program was held in February in partnership with the Simi Educators Association. Guest readers included Simi Valley Mayor and members of the City Council, Simi Valley Unified School District Board Members, and representatives from the the City Manager's Office, Police Department, and Ventura County Fire Department. Simi Valley also received a preview of the upcoming March 2024 Little House on the Prairie 50th Anniversary Festival. A cast member from the original television show was a featured guest reader, and professionally painted backdrops of iconic buildings from the show were displayed at the Festival.





In December, Library visitors gift-wrapped more than 70 books for children who may not receive holiday presents. The books were labeled with the target age and delivered to two charities for distribution to families and children they assist. James Storehouse is a charity that assists children in foster care, and Sarah's House is a maternity home which helps women and children experiencing homelessness. This project, in its third year, continues to strengthen its partnerships.



During the summer of 2023, the Library partnered with Moorpark College and Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center to host a photography exhibit in the Library. A reception for the emerging artists included a panel discussion where the artists talked with attendees about the artwork on display, the importance of photography, and the issues the art form is facing today.

## Library Facility

Facility visitors increased by 27% compared to FY2021-2022. The need for reservable spaces, group work spaces, program spaces and quiet reading areas often pushed the Library building's functional capacity. Space planning discussions during the year focused on maximizing the existing footprint of building by creating zones for quiet work, small group collaboration, and larger group meetings and programs.

## Library Collections



Ongoing analysis of the Library collection is possible with LibraryIQ, Library Systems & Services' collection management Platform. LibraryIQ is consulted frequently to uncover what items or genres are performing well so that more can be ordered. The LibraryIQ Platform now provides an analysis of diversity and representation in the collection, a feature the Library is excited to use.

# Library Programs

In November, the Library partnered with CSU Channel Islands to present 'Chumash Presence, Past and Present.' Guest lecturer Colleen Delaney, PhD presented on the history and culture of the Ventureño Chumash, with special focus on ecology and relationship to the land.

In January, the Library launched its first Winter Reading Challenge. The theme, *All the Feels*, promoted both reading and emotional literacy. The Challenge was formatted to resemble bingo and blended both reading challenges and self-reflection activities. Over the month-long Challenge, 67 participants logged over 668 hours of reading and completed 238 activities.

## WINTER READING CHALLENGE

**67**  
PARTICIPANTS

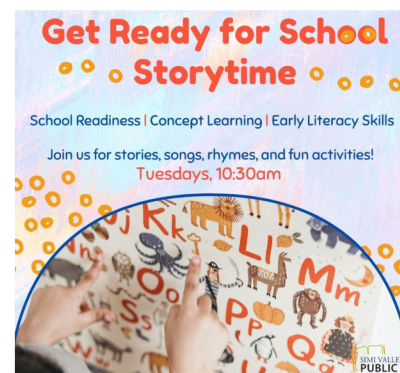
**668**  
HOURS OF READING

**238**  
ACTIVITIES

In observance of Women's History Month in March, the Library partnered with the local chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to present 'Women Making History', a panel of women currently working in male-dominated fields. The three panelists were Mandy Harrington, an engineer at Boeing; Melissa Gonzalez, an MD candidate at Keck School of Medicine, USC; and Dr. Jamie Snodgrass, Director of Instruction and Pupil Services at Simi Valley Unified School District.

Children's programs were expanded to include five storytimes a week. Storytimes were offered on weekday mornings, a weekday late-afternoon, and a weekend morning to make them accessible to as many families as possible. Get Ready for School storytime (3-6 years) focuses on school readiness, concepts, and skills. Tiny Tots storytime (1-3 years) is designed for child and caregiver interaction with fun and active songs, rhymes, and stories. The program resumed in September 2022 after being on hold for over two years; to accommodate growing participation, Tiny Tots moved out of the Children's Area and into the Community Room. Multicultural Storytime features guests who read in a language other than English or read culturally significant stories from other traditions. Baby Storytime (0-18 months) involved books, songs, and calm sensory activities for the caregiver to use both at storytime and home. This storytime included ample interaction between child and caregiver as well as the children. Family Storytime features a fun and casual environment for all ages, including a themed story and craft.

TAG started crochet and other craft group programs, taking the lead on program planning and promotion. Teens enjoyed the opportunity to create something while relaxing and connecting with their peers.





# Contributors

## LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

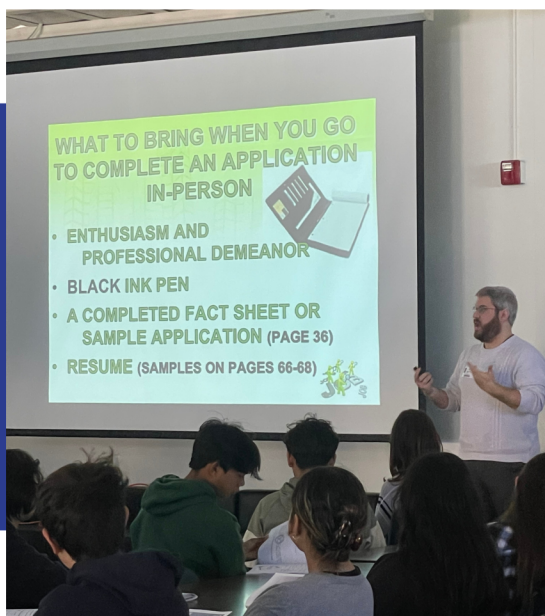
The Board of Trustees provide citizen oversight of Library operations. During FY2022-2023, the Board endorsed the addition of Mobile Library services and Adult Literacy services. The Board's commitment to supporting Library services and planning for the Library's future are foundational to meeting the community's needs.

- Fred Thomas, Chair
- Mike Judge, Trustee
- Dee Dee Cavanaugh, Trustee
- Elaine Litster, Trustee
- Rocky Rhodes, Trustee

## LIBRARY STAFF

A team of dedicated Staff members provide service to the community seven days a week and innovative programs are planned with input from Library users. In August 2022, Library Staff Day was held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. Guest speakers included Greg Lucas, California State Librarian; Randy Swan, Supervisory Curator at the Ronald Reagan Library; and Dianne Barry, Archivist at the Ronald Reagan Library.

Staff regularly represent the Library at various community gatherings and educational workshops such as Community Council, Council on Aging, and Youth Employment Service seminars.





## LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS

In FY2022-2023, Simi Valley Public Library's volunteer program grew significantly. Individuals and groups including the Busy Hands Garden Club and Friends of the Library contributed to a total of 7,268 hours of volunteer work. In late spring, 40 volunteers were specifically trained to assist with the Summer Reading Program. Many teen volunteers received both their required hours for National Honor Society and job recommendations from volunteering at the Library; they gained skills and experience for the workforce. The volunteer program also partnered with PALS to provide hands-on work experience for their adult participants.

## FRIENDS OF THE SIMI VALLEY LIBRARY

The Friends generously donate funds each year to cover partial supply costs for Library programs. In 2023, the Friends donated \$7,000 towards the Summer Reading Program and continued to pay for Hoopla digital content. The Friends of the Library Bookstore is open six days a week and is stocked with used books and DVDs; Library patrons frequently gather in the bookstore to look for new items to purchase. Thank you to the dedicated Board Members and volunteers.



- Cathy Meininger | President
- Diane Annis
- Teresa DeGagne
- Jennifer Frank
- Fran Harders
- Julia Hammon
- Gloria Hasson
- Caroline Hucker
- Susan Miller
- Gail Rich
- Lisa Trent
- D'Lorah Wismar



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The following organizations were valuable partners during FY2022-2023:



AAUW (American Association of University Women)  
Boys & Girls Club of Moorpark and Simi Valley  
Buen Vecino  
Busy Hands Garden Club  
California State Library  
California State University, Channel Islands  
City of Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center / Moorpark College  
City of Simi Valley Youth Council  
City of Simi Valley Youth Employment Services  
City of Simi Valley Senior Center  
Free Clinic of Simi Valley  
James Storehouse  
Literazzi  
Nora Hayes, Health Educator  
Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District  
READ Ventura County Library Adult Literacy  
Redbird's Vision  
Regal Medical Group  
Ronald Reagan Presidential Library  
Sarah's House  
Simi at the Garden  
Simi Educators Association  
Simi Valley Arts Alliance  
Simi Valley Art Association  
Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Simi Valley Community Council  
Simi Valley Friends of the Library  
Simi Valley Police Department  
Simi Valley Unified School District  
Sorooptimist International of Simi Valley  
Varenita of Simi Valley  
Ventura County SCORE