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Moraga's New Librarian

By Sophie Braccini



Carla Mason at the Moraga Library Photo
Sophie Braccini

Carla Mason does not know why the turnover of the library's managers has been so high in Moraga since Linda Waldroup's retirement at the beginning of 2011. "The cost of living is high here, and the position was only part-time. That may be a reason," said the new library manager, "but the position has been expanded to 40 hours a week now." Mason, who sought employment from Contra Costa County Library and chose Moraga for its good reputation, comes with experience, ideas, a genuine enthusiasm, as well a new team: Ann Miller, the new youth services librarian, and Elsie Tep, in charge of the adult services.

Mason earned a bachelor's in humanities at USC and worked as a data management analyst for Amgen in the first part of her professional life. Then she decided to reinvent herself and earned a master's degree in library science. "It may be because of my parents, but I draw both from

analytical abilities and a more artistic side," she said. "Books were always my companions - maybe because I was an only child. I also wrote short stories, but I also like data and what can be understood from it."

Mason's first library job was with Santa Clara County, first as a children's librarian, then as a manager of the Canyon Country Jo Anne Darcy Library. "But this was a very small library system and I wanted something more," she said. She applied to the Contra Costa system, was hired and was offered two different locations. "Everyone said that Moraga was the best," she said, "even the taxi driver taking me to the airport." Mason arrived two months ago with Miller, who transferred from Lafayette, and Tep.

Mason looks at her new domain with an appreciative and critical eye. "We just got new furniture for the children's library," she was happy to show. "Look at the little fort with the puppets, the 'dream-couch' (in shape of a cloud), and those colorful footstools the children line up to lay on." The children's programs have been extremely successful this summer. Miller is bringing some of her following for storytelling from Lafayette. She also suggested a science experiment session and "Makey Makey" - a successful invention kit activity that will be replicated later in the year.

The magazine section has hundreds of titles for people to grab and read on site. "I'd like to make this space more cozy and inviting," Mason said, looking at the old shelf where the magazines are stacked, and the furniture that could take a little rejuvenation. "I'd also like to be able to track which magazines are really popular and if people would like to see new ones on the shelves."

Mason opened a "Popular Mechanics" magazine the library just received and pointed to an article about someone who created a car with a 3D printer. "Do you know that the Moraga Library has a 3D printer for a month?" she asked with excitement. Mason is in the planning stages of developing a program for people to either use the printer, if they have their own program, or offer an activity that would teach the community how to use it. "[It's because of these types] of programs that I wanted to join a larger library system," said the manager.

Mason also wants to be part of the collection development committee as soon as her seniority will allow. She already enjoys studying the analytics of her new domain and seeing what kinds of books are most read in the community. "It seems that in Moraga people love mysteries," she said.

"There are many ideas of things I'd like to experiment with here," she added. "A local authors'

presentation in collaboration with other close-by libraries, or a drop-in to help people use their e-readers more efficiently. But what is most important to me is to get to know the community and gauge what people want."

Mason is confident that libraries will continue to be relevant in the future, and not only for the activities that are proposed. "People can find a lot of information online, but when they want to do serious research they need to know which online sources to trust. This is something that we learn at library school and we can help with."

Mason did not promise that she will stay as long as Waldroup did, nine years, but for now she is happy where she is and plans to leave her mark before her next step up.

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