San José Public Library Foundation Calls on the City of San Jose to Fully Restore Library Funding to Meet Post-COVID Challenges

Vice Mayor Charles "Chappie" Jones and Councilmember Pam Foley Join in Support of Critical Library Funding

San Jose, Calif., March 10, 2022 -- As COVID-19 begins to loosen its grip on civic life, the San José Public Library Foundation (SJPLF), City of San José Library and Education Commission, and Friends of the Library support groups are united in urging local leaders to fully restore hours and staffing at San Jose libraries to pre-pandemic levels. The Foundation will hold a press conference March 10 to shine a spotlight on the essential role of San Jose’s libraries in our post-COVID recovery and the imperative of full funding.

Unfortunately, such funding was not included in Mayor Sam Liccardo’s March 7 Budget Message. “Failure to adequately fund libraries at this time is a critical omission,” says SJPLF Executive Director Dawn Coppin. “As is so often the case, these cuts in service place a heavier burden on the vulnerable, high-need communities that rely on libraries the most. We must act now to ensure these communities have the resources and assistance they need to recover.”
San Jose libraries, already suffering closures and budget cutbacks left over from the 2009 recession, were hit hard during the pandemic. Over the last two years, they endured almost $2 million in budget reductions, which meant cuts in staff and severely reduced operating hours. Additionally, about one third of Library staff were moved from library services and put to work at the City of San Jose’s Emergency Operations Center. Despite these cutbacks, libraries continued to deliver a base level of essential services, amping up digital offerings during shelter-in-place, and providing express pick-up of materials at all locations.

But today’s libraries are more than places to borrow books. SJPLF supports a wide array of programs at San Jose libraries that seek to educate, engage, and empower residents to achieve their full potential. From basic children and adult literacy classes to educational programs that inspire children and teens to choose a college-bound path to professional development programs that provide a career path for adults, San Jose libraries provide a full spectrum of services that open the door to lifelong learning and opportunity.

“Programs like these are especially critical to our underserved communities as we enter into our post-COVID recovery. Libraries offer a lifeline to help people get back on their feet,” asserts Vice Mayor Chappie Jones.

Councilmember Pam Foley agrees. “San Jose libraries nourish our community. They provide a whole host of benefits. Besides serving as a safe place to work, study, or access the Internet, library programs supplement learning for students whose schooling has been disrupted and provide resources for those seeking new economic opportunities.”

For libraries to provide this lifeline, however, they must be fully funded. “In a city budget of over a billion dollars, the amount required to resume normal hours and staffing at our libraries – roughly $2 million – is miniscule,” says Coppin. “It’s a tiny investment that reaps huge rewards for those who need it most.”

Thursday’s press conference will feature two people whose lives have been directly impacted by library programs. Natalia Tskhovrebova got her high school diploma from the Library’s Career Online High School program. Natalia said “One day my daughter asked me: ‘What does a high school diploma mean to you? Why are you working so hard on this?’ I told her that a diploma is a step into the future, the main stage of education, the basics of life, the path to a better job and a better life, the life you dream of. I got my diploma in January 2022 and now I am taking the next step - I want to go to college to get the bachelor's degree that I’ve always dreamed about.”

For Sandra Patricia Madrigal Ruiz, it was the Library’s Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregiver Support Network that helped her pursue her dream of teaching. “I never imagined myself taking college classes,” she says. “And I could never have done it without the support of this program.”

The Library Foundation urges the public to take action. Please contact the Mayor and your City Council representative. Let them know how important your neighborhood library is, and ask them to prioritize library funding in the Proposed Budget.

Contact information, as well as helpful talking points, can be found at https://www.sjplf.org/contact-your-councilmember/.

You can also provide direct feedback on the city’s budgeting priorities by using the City of San Jose’s "Balancing Act" budget tool, which is available in multiple languages. The links are:

**English:** https://sanjose.abalancingact.com/2022english  
**Español:** https://sanjose.abalancingact.com/2022spanish  
**Vietnamese:** https://sanjose.abalancingact.com/2022vietnamese

Residents are also encouraged to make their views known at an upcoming public hearing on the Mayor’s budget message, which will be part of the March 15th City Council meeting.

The San Jose Public Library Foundation will host a press conference highlighting the critical need for
full library funding on Thursday, March 10th at 10:30am at the West Valley Branch Library, 1243 San Tomas Aquino Rd, San Jose, CA 95117. Vice Mayor Chappie Jones, Dawn Coppin, and other library advocates will speak at the event.

DISTRICT 1
San Jose Vice Mayor,
Charles "Chappie" Jones

Dawn Coppin, Executive Director,
San José Public Library Foundation

Sandra Gabriela Madrigal Ruiz (above left)
with her mother Sandra Patricia Madrigal Ruiz

Natalia Tskhovrebova,
Career Online High School Graduate

WHEN:
Thursday, March 10, 2022 | 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
10:30 a.m. - Press Conference begins
Opportunities before and after to capture b-roll and one-on-ones.

WHERE:
West Valley Branch Library
1243 San Tomas Aquino Road
San Jose, CA 95117
Press conference will take place on the patio in front of the Community Room. Plenty of onsite parking available.

WHO:
- Vice Mayor Charles "Chappie" Jones, District 1
- Dawn Coppin, Executive Director, San José Public Library Foundation
- Natalia Tskhovrebova, testimonial speaker on Career Online High School
- Sandra Patricia Madrigal Ruiz and her daughter Sandra Gabriela Madrigal Ruiz, testimonial speakers on Friend, Family, Neighbor Caregiver Support Network and the overall impact that the Library has had on their lives. *Both speak Spanish.*
- Hilary Thorsen, City of San José Library and Education Commissioner

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About San José Public Library Foundation:
At the heart of our community, libraries provide a place where everyone can learn, create, study and explore. The San José Public Library Foundation (SJPLF) was established in 1987 by a group of community volunteers who understood that a great library system needed more than public funding.

In 35 years, the SJPLF has raised more than $33 million to support San José Public Library programs and it continues to play a critical role in ensuring that all San José residents benefit from these innovative programs that rank the San José Public Library among the best in the nation.

The San José Public Library Foundation provides advocacy, financial support, and leadership to the San José Public Library's educational programs throughout all 25 branches in San José to create an educated, equitable, and engaged community. Visit [sjplf.org](http://sjplf.org).