



Lakeside Library Official Opening: 20 February 2015

It is only fitting to begin a speech at a library opening with a quote from an author, Carlos Dominguez:

“To build up a library is to create a life. It’s never just a random collection of books”

This is a statement which Midvaal Local Municipality has tried to live by and teach as far as possible. Libraries have always been one of the most important services that we have offered. And it has never been about putting up a building and throwing in some books. Libraries have always been about building communities in Midvaal, and today’s opening will pay tribute to that. Our libraries in Meyerton, Sicelo and now Lakeside, are linked to our community halls, so that they can serve as the centre of communities, bringing together people, providing knowledge, and opening up new opportunities, and this is part of the concept of providing one stop services centres for communities. This new library will provide the people of Lakeside with a quality of service parallel to any first world facility, with free internet services, outreach programmes, study rooms, computer training and a variety of services designed to meet the needs of the community.

Too often, as South Africans, we complain or hear others complaining about the problems of illiteracy, poor infrastructure availability, and unemployment, without actually doing anything about it. The libraries section within Midvaal, and the Gauteng Province, have taken responsibility for playing their part in addressing these problems, by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure, cultivating a love for books and information, and assisting youth with literacy and studying wherever possible. In order to build a successful society, we need well-informed citizens, and to achieve that, we need libraries and librarians that can fulfil this role.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto states that “Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and education”. National, provincial and local governments in every democracy must therefore support the development of library and information services. There is also a need for cooperation between school libraries and public libraries in South Africa, since these two sectors have similarities that could be explored and expanded to the benefit of its users. Public and school libraries house materials and ideas that are important in developing young people’s minds and that will equip them with learning and reading skills for the rest of their lives. Cooperation between schools and public libraries will improve the provision of library services to the young learners in specific areas.

Public libraries support the information needs of primary, secondary and adult education and are increasingly fulfilling an educational role in society. At the moment public libraries are the only facilities that provide free access to computers and the internet for many people and the demand

for electronic services is ever increasing. We need to take note that the use of modern and up to date technology and equipment will attract learners and students to the public library.

Midvaal would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Gauteng Department of Arts and Culture for their funding toward libraries; Lakeside library is well resourced and fully furnished today because of their funding. For this we say Thank You – it is truly appreciated.

I would like to end with a special message to the community:

A library is the heart of a community, a beacon of hope, a symbol of upliftment and empowerment. It is a safeguard against ignorance, tyranny, xenophobia, hatred, and despair. May this library play a positive role in the social development of Lakeside community, may it inspire critical thinking and may it motivate community members to read! Please remember that it is supposed to be for each community member: a peace haven, a village hub, a knowledge home, so much more than just books.....

I urge the Lakeside community to take ownership and ensure the facility is used responsibly and safe –guard it against vandalism and theft. The facility belongs to you, your children and grand-children. Do not let anyone take this gift, and the opportunities which it offers, away from you.