

## New bookmobile makes grand entrance in Aurora

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The new Aurora Public Library bookmobile arrives Monday morning to an awaiting crowd outside the library's downtown Aurora facility. (Steve Lord/The Beacon-News)

As the colorful new bookmobile lurched into the Aurora Public Library parking lot Monday morning in downtown Aurora, a crowd of library workers and community members clapped and cheered.

It was a long time coming - officials ordered the new bookmobile in 2021 and began planning for it and raising money for it before that - and the excitement was a little like expectant parents when the moment of birth finally comes.

“That’s a big baby,” said Jessica Cantanero, director of Outreach Services for the library. And, in her position, it’s sort of her baby, a key element to the outreach efforts of the library into the community.

“The bookmobile provides services to students and their families who cannot get to a branch,” said Michaela Haberkern, Aurora Public Library executive director. “It connects people with the joy of reading.”

The bookmobile is the primary library for about 20% of the library district’s most vulnerable students, according to library officials.

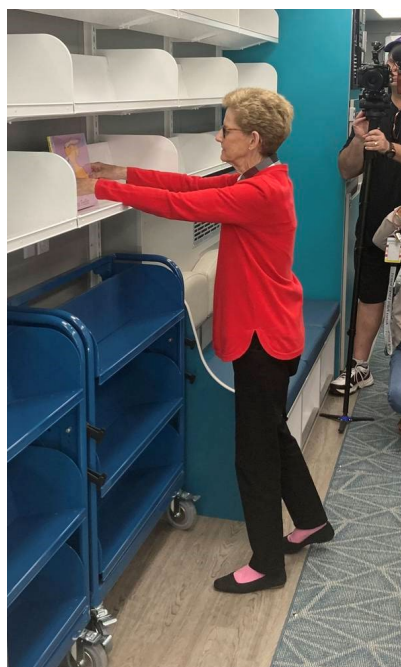
Haberkern pointed out that the Aurora Public Library District asked for input from the public on the design for both the inside and outside of the bookmobile.

“This is the community’s bookmobile,” she said. “We want everyone to know that, and to feel that.”

That was one reason Jonna Skeen-Dosado came to witness the new bookmobile's grand entrance into Aurora with her daughter, DL Dosado, who is the creative director of the Aurora Public Library District's Teen Advisory Board.

"Oh, it's beautiful," she said of the predominantly green with pastel highlights bookmobile. "It goes into neighborhoods where it's not always easy for people to make it to one of the branches. So, it's valuable."

The bookmobile's final cost was about \$450,000, and the Library Foundation, with help from a seed grant from the Dunham Foundation, raised most of that.



Diane Christian places the first book, "Bark George," a children's book, on a shelf Monday at the new Aurora Public Library bookmobile. (Steve Lord/The Beacon-News)

One donor to the cause was Diane Christian, a 40-year library employee who was chosen to place the first book on the empty shelves of the new bookmobile.

Christian retired as director of the Children's Library, and has since volunteered at the library in both the children's section and with Outreach Services.

She chose as the first book "Bark George," by Jules Feiffer.

"That was one of my favorites," she said. "I used it a lot in story time."

As she placed the book onto an empty shelf, she called it "an honor and a privilege."

"This is just wonderful," she said.