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[South County Regional: Birthday Celebration](#)

Library a solid 10 on its anniversary

More than a place for books, it's a center for nearby communities

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When Joan and John Faltisko's son was diagnosed with cancer, they knew exactly where to turn: South County Regional Library in Estero.

"This is our second home," Joan Faltisko said. "When we have a problem, we come here."

The Faltiskos joined library officials, volunteers and others for a 10th anniversary celebration Wednesday morning.

The Faltiskos, who are members of the Friends of South County Regional Library, said they wanted to create a memorial to their son, Ken Andol when he passed away.

Because the librarians were so helpful looking up information on his condition and medications, they decided to take money they would have spent on his headstone and give it to the Friends group.

"It's a living memorial," Joan Faltisko said. "You share it with the whole community."

The library has become a gathering place for the Estero, Three Oaks and San Carlos Park communities.

"What makes this a library and for many people a second home, are the people," said Lee County Commissioner John Albion, before reading a proclamation declaring Wednesday South County Regional Library Day.

Cas Obie, vice president of Friends of South County Regional Library, led the program, which included remarks from four county commissioners, managers from the countywide library system, library regional manager Beth Nagengast and music from Bill and Beth Larsen from the Southwest Florida Symphony.

"It's such an important part of our community," Nagengast said.

Because it is the regional library, the senior outreach program, bookmobile and books-by-mail programs all operate out of the library on Three Oaks Parkway.

Joan Machon lives in County Creek, just around the



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Lee County Commissioner John Albion helps celebrate, as Beth Nagengast, manager of the South County Regional Library, blows out a birthday cake for the library's 10th anniversary celebration. The event, held at the library in Estero on Wednesday, was sponsored by the Friends of South County Regional Library.

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LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

- Registered users: more than 28,000
- July 2006 visitors: 17,666 (up 90 percent from 9,345 in July 1997)
- Collection size: 171,710 materials comprised of regular and large-type books, magazines, newspapers, videos, DVDs, books on CD and tape, music CDs
- Average monthly circulation: 33,700 materials
- 2005 circulation: 405,039
- Employees: 28 (if you add up all of the years they've worked for Lee library system, that's 202 years)
- Public computers: 24
- Meeting room chairs: 99
- Number of children who participated in summer reading programs: more than 1,100
- July 2006 volunteer hours: 156.5 including 18.5 from computer coaches (280 to 380 hours a month during season)

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corner from the library where she's been a volunteer for six years. She used to work in youth services and now helps out on the bookmobile.

"This is what I enjoy doing," she said. "I think it's a wonderful source of knowledge."

Machon spends two mornings a week helping the library's 28 employees, seven of which helped open the library in 1996.

Nagengast said they have a contest every year among employees to see who can get closest to the number of people coming through the library's doors.

Last year, around 700 people came through on Aug. 23 and she said she expects this year's number to be much higher, as past employees, volunteers and countless patrons visit the library to celebrate.

"The building has been transformed from an empty space into a thriving library," wrote Wendy Allex, manager of the library when it opened 10 years ago. Obie read letters sent from her, as well as former library director Linda Holland and Friends of South County Regional Library president Claire Hauenstein.

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