

Building Libraries for Rural Readers

By Leslie Overman

Residents of Yatesville, Ga., once relied on weekly bookmobile stops to get their hands on the latest best-sellers. The town of fewer than 500 people had no bookstores, and the nearest library was about 13 miles away in the county seat of Thomaston.

With the help of part-time resident Dan White, Mgt 89, the townspeople now have thousands of titles within reach and access to 9 million more.

White, who attended high school in Yatesville and whose mother lived there until recently, approached the city council in 1999 with a challenge gift to build a library. Within two years, the community had raised \$187,000 through private donations and grants from the state to build and equip the library. In 2002, the doors to the Yatesville Public Library opened.

A smile spread across White's face as he recalled a visit to the library shortly after its opening during which he spotted a little girl flipping through the pages of a book and reading aloud to her mother.

The library's success led White, the owner of the residential building and development company Passive Solar Design & Construction Inc., to found the Rural Library Project. The nonprofit helps rural communities establish small libraries by providing design and project management as well as financial and fundraising services without charge, relying on public donations to support its operations.

White, who serves as director of program services, is joined at the Rural Library Project by Sarah Wynn, IE 83. White persuaded Wynn, whom he met through Tech, to leave her job with Friendship Force International and serve as the Rural Library Project's director of administrative services. The two-person team now is helping build libraries in several Georgia communities as well as in rural areas of Mississippi, Michigan, New Hampshire and Nova Scotia. With support from the project, Whitesburg, Ga., opened an energy-efficient library earlier this year.

The Rural Library Project helps communities of 500 to 1,500 people, White said, explaining that there are about 200 such small towns without libraries in Georgia alone. "We have our work cut out for us."

Despite the services the nonprofit offers the communities, the townspeople make things happen, White said.

"They are the engines," he said. "This is a grassroots effort. It doesn't fall from the sky. What we try to do as an organization is help with the technical side of it."

Wynn, who served in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic after graduating from Tech, said it's remarkable how enthusiastic residents of the rural communities have been about getting involved in the development of the libraries.

At the dedication ceremony for the Whitesburg library, community members in attendance were asked to stand up if they had donated either time or money to the project. White said about 300 people attended the



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Georgia Tech alums Dan White and Sarah Wynn help small towns establish libraries through the Rural Library Project.

gathering and nearly every person rose to his feet.

White's idea for the Yatesville library came after his father's death in 1997. He had been searching for a way to honor his father's memory when he read a magazine article about how the construction of a library rejuvenated a small town in upstate New York. The story inspired White to provide the initial seed money to build Yatesville's library.

The Yatesville library serves about 1,500 households in eastern Upson County. The passive solar-heated 2,600-square-foot facility has nine computer terminals with high-speed Internet access, study areas, community meeting space and an area dedicated to the town's history. While the library's shelves can hold up to 10,000 books, its members also have access to 9.6 million books and other materials through the Georgia Public Library Service's online catalog.

White recently met with faculty members in the College of Architecture to discuss how Tech students could become involved in designing rural libraries.

"There are a fair number of people at Tech from rural areas," White said. "I think if they were aware of this effort, they might be interested in helping their communities meet this need."

Those interested in learning more about the Rural Library Project may visit its Web site at www.rurallibraryproject.org.

largest publicly traded engineering, construction and maintenance corporation, for 20 years. He is the project director leading engineering and construction on a \$2 billion solar-energy plant for Renewable Energy Corp. He also is the Fluor executive liaison with Georgia Tech.

Susan Hoxie-Key, MS NE 85, has been named the recipient of the American Nuclear Society's Mary Jane Oestmann Professional Women's Achievement Award, presented for outstanding personal dedication and technical achievement by a woman for work performed in the fields of nuclear science, engineering, research or education. Hoxie-Key worked at the Savannah River Site for 11 years and joined Southern Nuclear Operating Co. in 1990, working for 16 years in reactor core analysis and nuclear fuel-related licensing. She now is the nuclear fuel supply supervisor at Southern Nuclear, where she is responsible for the development and implementation of the company's nuclear fuel supply strategy.

Don Kinser, ME 82, CEO and founder of EDI Ltd. in Atlanta and Seattle, was elected president of American Whitewater in May. Founded in 1954, American Whitewater is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving and protecting America's whitewater rivers and enhancing the public's opportunities to enjoy them safely. Kinser has served on the organization's board of directors since 2002 and will serve a two-year term as president. He lives in Marietta, Ga., and Long Creek, S.C., with his wife, Nanci, and their children, Kelsey, Alison and Max.

Chris Pogson, ISyE 88, is the plant manager for Chemtrade's Shreveport, La., sulfuric acid manufacturing facility. He spent the last three years as the plant manager of Chemtrade's plant in Riverton, Wyo. Pogson, his wife, Trudy, and daughters, Carly and Erin, have relocated to the Shreveport area.

Julee Potter, BS Arch 88, M Arch 90, has earned professional accreditation in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design from the U.S. Green Building Council. Potter, who joined Davis Architects in 1995, recently joined 11 other LEED-accredited professionals at the Birmingham firm as members of Alabama's strongest "Green Design Team." A vice president of the Davis firm and the principal in charge of finances, Potter serves on the boards of the Shades Cahaba Elementary School PTO and the Homewood Public Library and is a member of the Homewood Oxmoor Rotary Club.

Thomas Rollbuhler, ChE 85, a senior engineering specialist, was awarded Patent Project of the Year by AKZO Nobel in November 2007. Rollbuhler lives in Woodstock, Ga.