



Update, June 2020

Outreach project places more than 9,500 phone calls to senior citizens

After Fort Worth Public Library buildings temporarily closed to the public in March because of COVID-19 health concerns, a handful of library staff reached out to cardholders 65 and older to check on them.

With stay-at-home orders in effect, the personal calls – a total of 9,572 calls placed from April to June – made a positive impact. Staff members connected one-on-one with 4,223 patrons and left messages for the remaining 5,349 on the list.

Abigail Watts, a part-time Customer Service Specialist at the Central Library, shared her thoughts as the project was happening.

“I’ve talked to people who are having a hard time being secluded inside of their homes due to the virus,” Watts said. “I can hear the sound of relief in their voices when they realize the Library staff is reaching out to them. They are very surprised and thankful that we care.”

For Lee Johnson, who is Library Director Manya Shorr’s Administrative Assistant, the senior calling project let her do something she normally doesn’t usually do in her role.

Calls were averaging about 18 minutes, but sometimes they were much longer.

Johnson recalled a 45-minute chat with a 90-year-old patron who was shocked that the library called. The woman’s reminiscences gave comfort to both of them, she said.

“This assignment has been especially very gratifying to me,” Johnson said. “After the first day, I knew this was the right thing for us to do.”

The calling project is just one way the Fort Worth Public Library aims to be of service to residents during difficult times.

In May, the morning show on KXAS-Channel 5 highlighted the project with a “Something Good” segment (watch it [here](#)).

For Regional Manager Barbara Henderson, who led the project for the Library, it was definitely something good. Henderson said she has always been drawn to services for older people, so the calling project meant a lot to her.



**FORT WORTH
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

“This was one of the most gratifying projects I have had the opportunity to work on. To know that you made someone’s day by a simple phone call, was the highlight of the thousands of calls made,” Henderson said, “We look forward to using the data gathered from this project to explore other opportunities to connect with our customers.”