

LONG ISLANDSUFFOLK

\$24.7M Half Hollow Hills Library opens with new look, modern amenities



The new Half Hollow Hills Library houses three 3-D printers and a full teaching kitchen for cooking classes. Credit: Danielle Silverman

By Deborah S. Morrisdeborah.morris@newsday.com[svmorris](https://www.newsday.com/svmorris) Updated April 28, 2022 6:41 pm

The new \$24.7 million Half Hollow Hills library is an example of what an "it" library offers.

Built from the ground up starting in 2018, it features a self-service café; a full teaching kitchen for cooking classes; an outdoor space for children; a gaming area for teens; state-of-the-art livestreaming technology; and a fully accessible auditorium with movie screen.





And, of course, good old-fashioned books.

“We’re super excited,” said library director, Helen Crosson. “We’re waiting on a few items, but we’re close enough, So I said, ‘Let’s just go and reopen.’”

After a soft opening in March, the grand reopening is May 1. The library is at 55 Vanderbilt Motor Pkwy.

The previous building was shuttered four years ago on Halloween.

That building, constructed in the mid-1960s, was not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, did not have sprinklers and had only one large community room that flooded when it rained, often causing programs to be canceled.

Crosson, who started as director in 2015 with a mission to update the library, said it became clear very quickly that it was more economical to raze the building and start fresh.



After a soft opening in March, the library's grand reopening is May 1. Credit: Danielle Silverman

"It's much less money to tear it down and start over than to try to retrofit a 50-year-old building," Crosson said. "It just doesn't work."

In October 2017, the community approved a \$14.5 million bond for the rebuild, with other funding coming from the library's capital reserves and \$500,000 in New York State Construction grant money. Crosson said no taxpayer money was used for the self-service café, as all furnishings were provided by the vendor.

Meeting with the public helped guide trustees to deliver the things that the community wanted, she said.



Half Hollow Hills library director Helen Crosson, left, and assistant director Charlene Muhr. Credit: Danielle Silverman

The building also includes a multipurpose room with shock-absorbing flooring to support the library's 11 weekly sessions of fitness classes.

Crosson said she's also really proud of the project's green initiatives, including solar panels, GeoCool underground air conditioning, the installation of an Innovative Alternative Septic System and an electric car charging station.



A view of the ground floor of the Half Hollow Hills Library. Credit: Danielle Silverman

While some final touches remain, including technology components and furnishings, Crosson said she is ready to welcome back the community to see the finished product.

"It's time," Crosson said. "There was a huge team of people that worked together to get us here."

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