

First read on Oak View Library: It's a hit!

Children line up to check out library books at city's first new branch in 30 years.

BY NANCY LUNA

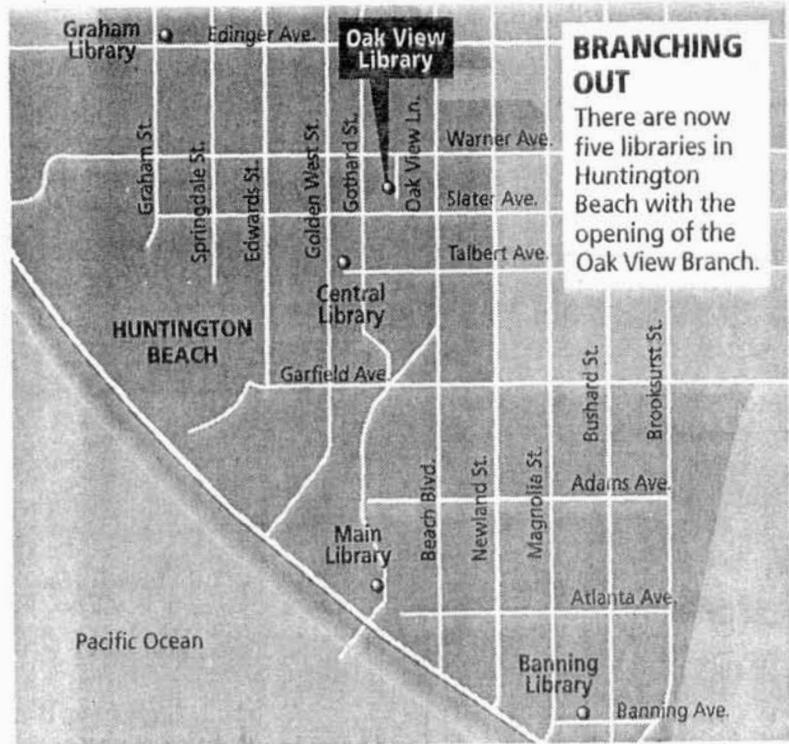
The Huntington Beach Wave

Antonio Benitez awakened Saturday morning knowing it would be a special day.

Antonio, 13, rushed to get ready after eating a "big" breakfast of steak and eggs.

"I kept telling my little brother Angel, 'come-on, come-on let's go,'" said Antonio, who walked three blocks from his Queens Lane apartment to the grand opening of the Oak View Library.

Antonio and Angel were among the estimated 1,000 children, parents and city leaders who attended the Saturday grand opening of the Oak View Library — the city's



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first new branch in 30 years.

By 10:30 a.m. Antonio and Angel had checked out three books: "Curious George Visits the Zoo," "Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe" and "Where's Waldo in Hollywood."

"I wanted to be the first one here," said Antonio, proudly flashing his 5-year-old city library card.

The library, with its storytime hours, literacy programs, homework assistance and reference materials, is expected to cater to the largely Hispanic Oak View neighborhood.

"We have such limited resources for these kids," said Fran Andrade, who works at Oak View Elementary School as a bilingual community liaison.

Andrade said poor neighborhood families don't have cars and can't drive children to Central Library, the next closest branch.

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"It might as well be 20 miles away," Andrade said. "It's too big for the kids that are so inexperienced. It's scary."

The modest, 1,800-square-foot Oak View Library pales in comparison to the monstrous Central Library. But, says Andrade, Oak View's proximity will draw curious neighborhood children to go inside.

By noon Saturday, dozens of balloon-toting children lined up to check out books and apply for library cards — a sign of a successful day, said library director Ron Hayden.

"It's so significant to open a library when the county is closing some of theirs," he said.

Oak View Library will be open from 1 to 5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To volunteer, call (714) 842-4481.

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