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Contact:

Erin Sullivan, Public Relations Administrator
407-835-7480, sullivan.erin@ocls.info

Orange County Library's Genealogy Center staff awarded RUSA Award of Excellence

ORLANDO, FL – The West Oaks Branch and Genealogy Center has been awarded the Excellence in Reference and Adult Library Services award for its Genealogy offerings to customers. Presented by the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), a division of the American Library Association, this award recognizes libraries for developing imaginative and unique resources to meet patrons' reference needs. The Library received a \$1,500 monetary prize to help support future genealogy services.

The Genealogy Center, located at the West Oaks Branch in Ocoee, Florida, contains a collection of around 40,000 volumes and specializes in states east of the Mississippi River. The Florida State Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) designated OCLS as the repository of the DAR library in 1929, a relationship that continues today. The library maintains the Genealogy LibGuide, where customers can view information on how to get started with their research, as well as more advanced resources related to DNA, planning research trips, and specific record groups.

The West Oaks Branch and Genealogy Center employs a full time Genealogy Specialist, Allison Ryall, who offers weekly events to customers in the Central Florida community. Topics range from basic and beginning genealogy to advanced research techniques and DNA. Allison teaches about specific record groups that are important in genealogy research, including census records, vital statistics, land records, probate records, and immigration records. Additionally, a series of classes are offered on a variety of popular genealogical websites including "Advanced Searching on Ancestry" and "Exploring FamilySearch.org." Allison hosts monthly study groups that meet to discuss advanced DNA and genetic genealogy topics, as well as current genealogy trends and news.

Allison provides one-on-one assistance to customers who have in-depth genealogical research questions through the library's Book-A-Pro service. OCLS cardholders can schedule an appointment to meet with Allison, who will work to help them further their research, identify and use new resources, analyze their DNA results, and help them gain a new perspective to break down genealogical brick walls.

The Genealogy Center continued to provide its unique and expansive selection of genealogy services to customers through the Covid-19 pandemic. In April 2020, events that had previously been offered in-

person were being presented online through Zoom, and the Genealogy Specialist was fielding reference and research questions previously asked in the branch, through phone and email.

Established in 1990, the RUSA Award for Excellence in Reference and Adult Library Services is sponsored by Data Axle Reference Solutions.

Find out more about upcoming events and additional resources by visiting ocls.info/genealogy.

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