

BRANCHING OUT

With the move of the library's genealogy collection to the newly renovated West Oaks Branch & Genealogy Center, neighboring communities now have the ability to access records and documents previously located much further away. We took this transitional time as an opportunity to speak to the officers and members of the Central Florida Chapter of the African American Historical & Genealogical Society (AAHGS). Part of their objective is to encourage others to get started in researching their family history and learning more about African American history.

President Kevin O. Mitchell explains that the genealogy collection, including census data, records indexes, city directories and more, makes the library an attractive meeting place for their group. Members Shaunie Thompson and Ann Harrell shared what a benefit the collection has been to their genealogy research over the years. "I started coming here in middle school to research in the genealogy department with my mother. [Learning] things that my mother didn't know about our family allowed us to develop a family history and family stories. Through the records, and being able to find names, places and people, it's been a value to our family," said Thompson. In addition, Harrell mentioned, "I would be remiss if I did not say something about the library's reference staff. Over the years they have been wonderful. It's been an asset, especially those who have been willing to speak with our group. They are also available to beginners who are just starting the process." Reference staff are available during open library hours to assist with online services, books, records and documents that can be helpful in beginning or furthering your genealogy research.

The members of the AAHGS suggest ways to get started include visiting the library to see what an expansive collection we have, asking questions at home to relatives, and starting out with a simple family tree. The library has free Five Generation Pedigree charts to get you started in laying a foundation for your research. Another way can be attending monthly programs at the West Oaks Branch & Genealogy Center that teach library users about the many resources available. You can check dates and times on our online calendar to see which ones fit your schedule. Additionally, if you are interested in joining the AAHGS, please visit their website at rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flcfaahg. They will also take part in several events in celebration of *Black History Month* throughout February. Please visit their website for more information.

SAVE THE DATE

The African American Historical & Genealogical Society will be at the new West Oaks Branch & Genealogy Center on Saturday, April 11 at 10:15 a.m. Join the group for a tour of the new Genealogy Department and an introduction to genealogy research.