Mona Carmack to Retire This Month after 18 Years as Johnson County Librarian

by Marsha Bennett, Community Relations Coordinator

County Librarian Mona Carmack will retire from Johnson County Library on January 26, 2007, ending a library career spanning 37 years in four states. During her tenure, Johnson County Library has more than doubled its holdings, including books and audiovisual materials, and more than tripled the number of items borrowed annually by library users.

Carmack came to Johnson County in 1988 as County Librarian after serving as director of the Great River Regional Library, St. Cloud, Minnesota, for eight years. Prior to that, she was director of the Public Library at Ames, Iowa, for five years and served as head librarian at the Public Library at Brookings, S.D., for six years.

When Carmack assumed the duties of Johnson County Librarian, the county system had nine libraries, which included a central library at the Antioch Library location in Merriam. The library had holdings of 564,983 items. Slightly more than 1.8 million items were checked out that year. Patrons were still using the wooden drawers of the card catalog and the Internet was a decade away.

As County Librarian, Carmack directed the following major building/renovation projects:

1992 - Shawnee Library opened
1993 – Leawood Pioneer Library opened
1995 – Central Resource Library opened
1996 – Renovated Antioch Library opened
1997 – Expanded Lackman Library opened
1998 – Corinth Library renovated
1999 – Oak Park Library renovated
2000 – Replacement Blue Valley Library opened
2000 – Edgerton Library opened
2001 – Replacement Gardner Library opened

Johnson County Library was the recipient of the 2005 National Award for Library Service by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and is ranked third nationally in its category in the Hennen American Public Library Rating Index.

Carmack has participated in several professional associations and boards, including the Kansas Library Association, Kansas Library Network Board, Kansas City Metropolitan Library Network, Public Library Association, Mountain Plains Library Association, and American Library Association.

In 2004, she received the Kansas Library Association Presidential Award and Mountain Plains Library Association Distinguished Service Award, and was listed in "Who's Who Among American Women" in 2005, and also in the 2006 edition.

The Johnson County Library has 12 branch libraries in 11 cities in addition to the Central Resource Library, which opened in 1995 in Overland Park. The library system has 1.2 million holdings, an annual circulation of more than 6 million, and 374,000 card holders.

Johnson County Library was established in 1952 and serves a population of more than 400,000 in the metropolitan Kansas City area. The library has 379 full and part-time employees and an annual budget of $22,805,280. Supporting the library are more than 450 volunteers, the 900-member Friends of the Library, and the Johnson County Library Foundation which is building an endowment for library collections.