



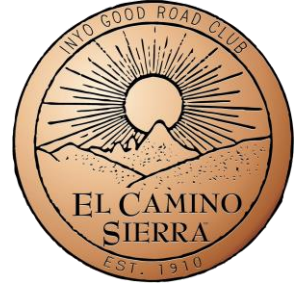
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On the Road Again: Inyo County Gets New 'Bookmobile'

Staff and volunteers with the Inyo County Free Library will soon be hitting the open road as part of an effort to improve access to literacy, history, and educational programs and materials from Bishop to Tecopa.

The "Mountains to Desert Library Service" is the reincarnation of the Inyo County "Bookmobile," defunct now for more than 30 years. Before its decommissioning, the Bookmobile was a common site for much of the 1960s and '70s as it traveled U.S. 395 and State Route 190 to bring the world of imagination and knowledge to communities near and far.

The Bookmobile's long-awaited replacement arrived in Independence on Wednesday all the way from Ohio, where vendor Farber Specialty Vehicles built the Mercedes Sprinter van to specifications – replete with a 6-cylinder diesel engine, solar panels, a wi-fi hotspot, engine-driven generator, and battery pack – to make for smoother service delivery in Inyo County's more off-the-grid locales.

For Library Director Nancy Masters, the return of mobile library services is a dream finally reaching fruition; in fact, it has been on her wish list since being promoted to the Director position in 2008.

"I'm so excited it's a reality," Masters said.

The new service likely wouldn't have been possible without a \$173,685 grant from the California State Library with the bid awarded in October 2021. Although it would take another 10 months for the library to take possession of the new Bookmobile, Inyo County was lucky, according to Masters; other California counties who received the same mobile library grant had difficulty receiving vehicles within the grant timeline due to significant supply chain shortages.

The Mountains to Desert Library Service will eventually roll out on regular book runs to outlying communities, where books can be checked in or out with the library's automated system. Masters said the Bookmobile will also be used to bring programming to Inyo County's schools and libraries. Its inaugural assignments will include appearances in Independence and Bishop in support of upcoming Memory Lab events.

Masters envisions utilizing the Bookmobile to grab the attention of future readers and inspire a lifelong love of books. The van is equipped with a sound system similar to that of an ice cream truck, and Masters said she already knows of two people who have offered to write an original song for the library's use.

So perhaps with a theme song heralding its arrival, the Bookmobile will soon be bringing children's story hours and other events to a community near you.

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