Library Expands Early Literacy Offerings for Children and Caregivers

Mid-Continent Public Library Hosts Literacy Fairs, Installs In-Branch Literacy Spaces

Greater Kansas City, MO – Mid-Continent Public Library is proud to announce the launch of its series of Early Childhood Literacy Fairs, which offer young children (ages birth through six) and their caregivers a guided tour of the expansive early literacy resources available at the Library as well as a chance to participate in recommended early literacy activities including games, music, and more. Upcoming fairs include:

**Saturday, February 4 - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**
Woodneath Library Center
8900 NE Flintlock Road, Kansas City, MO

**Saturday, February 18 - 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**
Buckner Branch
19 E. Jefferson St., Buckner, MO

During the Early Childhood Literacy Fair on February 18, the Buckner Branch will also host a grand opening event for its newly installed *Early Literacy Space*, which provides an area for children and caregivers to interact together with the essential early literacy practices of playing, talking, singing, reading, and writing in an engaging and fun atmosphere. MCPL has introduced these deliberately designed spaces in several of its branches—including Blue Ridge, Boardwalk, Colbern Road, Excelsior Springs, Liberty, and South Independence—and plans to integrate them into 30 of its branches.

Each of the spaces is customized to its branch’s specific needs and encourages gross and fine motor skill development as well as developmentally appropriate and beneficial play. The spaces incorporate materials such as child-sized seating, felt and magnet boards, activity cubes, and puppet theatres. MCPL initiated the project after receiving feedback from customers about the need for dedicated library space for young children.

“The goal of these new initiatives—and for all our early literacy efforts, really—is to provide fun and engaging learning opportunities for young children and their caregivers,” said Naphtali Faris, MCPL Early Literacy Coordinator. “Whether it be through playing with literacy-rich activities in our Early Literacy Spaces or by singing songs during storytime at their local MCPL branch, the Library helps children and their caregivers build a strong foundation of learning and literacy. It is this strong foundation that will enable children to be ready for school and become lifelong learners.”

Both the fairs and the Early Literacy Spaces are components of the Library’s Grow A Reader initiative, which strives to prepare children to become strong readers and lifelong learners. Programs like storytime, 1000 Books Before Kindergarten, and Summer Learning Program, coupled with resources like the MCPL Kids website (mcplkids.org) and the recently launched Reading Rocket (a mobile early literacy unit), are all integral pieces in...
achieving this mission. The entire Grow A Reader program will be one of the main beneficiaries of the additional funding approved by voters last November. The Library is currently working on expansion plans for the early literacy initiatives that will begin once that additional funding arrives in 2018.

To learn more about the Library’s early literacy programs and services, visit growareader.org.

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**Mid-Continent Public Library** is the largest library system in the Kansas City metropolitan area, operating 31 branches and four Library-To-Go locations and serving over 792,000 people in Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties. The Library strives to enrich our citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration. MCPL is a **2014 National Medal for Museum and Library Service winner**. Connect with the Library on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.