

No need for ... quiet hours

August 16, 2019



The words “library” and “a quiet place” seem to go hand in hand.

But special areas of the Chetco Public Library in Brookings, the Curry County Public Library in Gold Beach, and the Del Norte County Public Library in Crescent City can be anything but quiet.

Those areas are filled with voices and music during a special children’s story time that’s designed for learning and just plain fun.

On Wednesday morning, Aug. 7, a room in the Brookings library echoed with the sounds of music and laughter. The Good Times Jam Band of Brookings was performing for story time.

“I hope we are developing in the kids a sense that music is fun, that it’s relaxed. It’s not formal and gives them the chance to move and to dance and to sing, and of course to smile and tell stories,” said band leader Russ Oelhaim.

“I just love being around kids and teaching. I have taught them all my life.”

Oelhaim and his six-member band formed a semicircle in the library room as children and adults sat on the floor or in nearby seats to listen and sing with the music. Oelhaim invited individual children to come up and sing during the performance as well.

Holding her 9-month-old daughter, Sophie, Katie Peart of Brookings said story time was an important way to help her daughter gain exposure to music. “This is all about enrichment,” said Peart.

Gia Podesta of Brookings had brought her two young nieces, Avery and Sophie, to the library. “This is a great class,” Podesta said. “I had fun and I enjoyed the music,” agreed Sophie.

Chetco Library’s youth services director, Lorene Forman, said story time is designed to help small children learn and feel comfortable. “We have the books, the songs and the music, so it is all integrated to enforce the learning,” she said.

“And we want the children to know the library is a safe, fun and happy place they can come to all their life.”

In Gold Beach, Curry County Public Library story time coordinator Janet Lensing said the session’s activities help bridge a potential gap in learning while children are out of school for the summer.

“But also, and maybe more primarily, it’s a community family learning event,” Lensing said. “Our goal is to instill the love of learning, and particularly reading, for all ages.”

She said story time might be the first formal learning environment for small children. “So, we try to assist them in experiencing some group manners with the dynamics of sharing, taking turns, raising hands, listening quietly, and simply coming to the library.”

In Crescent City, Del Norte County Public Library technician Brandi Sharp said each story time has a crafted theme “so that kids have something to take home with them. Kids develop motor skills as they color and paste. They get to use their imaginations to decorate projects.”

Forman only recently began in her role as youth services director at the Brookings library, having arrived from Madras and the Jefferson County Library in Central Oregon.

She said she hopes to continue the established children’s programs at the library, but also to enhance the opportunities for kids. “I’d like to see more music programs for kids here at the library,” she said. “It’s something the kids really enjoyed at my last library.”

Foreman said she’d also like to develop book clubs and more hands-on projects for children. She said story time is designed to provide families options away from televisions and social media, offering time for them to better connect with each other.

“The library can be a place where they have meditation time, and time to be exposed to the written word, and to have activities helping with learning,” she said.

“So, you have the parents and the grandparents coming in with the kids and everybody is doing the same thing together. They are all listening to the stories together and singing along with the music.”

The Chetco, Curry and Del Norte libraries offer a verity of children's and youth learning opportunities. For more information, call the Chetco Public Library at 541-4369-7738, or visit the library at 405 Alder St. in Brookings; call the Curry County Library at 541-247-7246, or visit the library at 94341 3rd St. in Gold Beach; call the Del Norte County Library at 707-464-9793, or visit the library at 190 Price Mall in Crescent City.