

The Wonder Bus is back

July 25, 2021



Have you ever wondered about the Wonder Bus?

The Wonder Bus is a colorfully decorated mobile library and resource center operated by the Del Norte Child Care Council for young children throughout the county. Beginning in 2001, Wonder Bus programs have included story time, songs, crafts, game and toy lending — all in support of early literacy and school readiness. The Wonder Bus was put on hold during the pandemic but has shifted back into drive recently.

Families who utilize the resource are thankful for that. Last Wednesday, Katie Smith and her 2-year-old daughter Willow Parker-Smith were reading a book they checked out from the bus library. Outside the bus, workers with the DNCC had set up toys and bubbles for the children to play with and were offering a free read-along story time.

“She loves to come here and play,” said Smith. “She loves buses, and she can look at books. Also, my 9-year-old son will come and check out a book to take home.”

Smith said she and her children have been using the Wonder Bus for about 10 years.

Melodee Mitchell, executive director at DNCC, said the Wonder Bus has helped hundreds of kids during the past twenty years.

“The Wonder Bus is this big, beautiful attraction for children and families. Once you’re exposed to the Wonder Bus, you really get wrapped around literacy and school-ready projects,” said Mitchell.

Mitchell said the primary goal of the Wonder Bus is to reach kids in the outlying communities, such as Smith River, Gasquet and Klamath, who don’t have equal access to books, or the other resources the bus offers. On

the bus, kids and parents can also get help signing up for library cards and early learning programs, such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and First 5's Ready For K Texting program.

Nevertheless, the bus has had an uncertain future at times due to a lack of consistent funding.

For two years, the bus was parked. It needed repairs and its maintenance fund had dried up. However, through community support, the bus was repaired and was able to get back on the road in September of 2019.

Now, the bus is easing back into operation since the pandemic closure and can be found at the Wednesday Farmers Market in Crescent City, parked outside the Del Norte Child Care Council at 212 K Street. Mitchell said they are in the process of creating a long-term route for the bus.

Wonder Bus partners include First 5 Del Norte, City of Crescent City, Del Norte County Child Support Services, The California Endowment — Building Healthy Communities, SeaQuake Restaurant and Brewing, Del Norte Office of Education, Del Norte County Library, Mor Jon Inc., California Auto Image and the Wild Rivers Community Foundation.