

MOM'S THE WORD: All cooped up with the news

FARMINGTON OBSERVER

A GANNETT COMPANY



SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2014 • hometownlife.com



These are some of the toys available at the Farmington Community Library. PHOTOS BY JOHN STORMZAND | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LITERACY & LEARNING

It's a family affair at Farmington library

By Joanne Maliszewski
Staff Writer

Literacy is a family and community affair at the Farmington Community Library.

"Bev Papai (former library director) wanted to make the library a destination for all families," said Lauri Scott, head of children's services at the Hills branch on 12 Mile. "We are expanding on her work to provide materials for independent creative play."

And that creative play is used to promote literacy, to help children read, comprehend and learn, while also providing parents and caregivers with help and guidance.

To that end, the two-branch library system is now affiliated with the national network of Family Place Libraries — a group of more than 300 libraries in 23 states to, in basic terms, provide experiences in the



Lauri Scott, head of children's services at the Farmington Hills branch of the Farmington Community Library, in the creative play section.

See LIBRARY, Page A5



Laurie Scott, head of children's services at the Farmington Hills branch of the Farmington Community Library, displays toys that are available for parents and kids to use to improve literacy. JOHN STORMZAND | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LIBRARY

Continued from Page A1

library that develop and solidify literacy.

The affiliation also allowed the Farmington library to earn a grant that was used to train staff in early childhood development and how the library can support learning.

"Creative play is the foundation for literacy," Scott said.

When the Hills library expanded some years ago, the children's section received LEGOs, puppets and other toys to promote creative play. Today as an affiliate of Family Place Libraries, it has added blocks, a toy kitchen, dollhouse and farm, as well as plans for a transportation center that will boast cars and trucks.

"Toys give the opportunity to connection a concrete object with a word that is abstract," Scott said. "Kids can play with a toy truck and realize, 'Oh, I can drive this truck on the road.'"

But creative play as a way to increase literacy and learning isn't just for chil-

dren. The adults in their lives must be a part of the learning process.

"Creative play engages parents to have conversations with the child. It is one of the most important ways for their child to increase vocabulary and speaking skills," Scott said. "All parents have the tools. If they have questions on how to better use these tools, the library is wonderful place to get that information."

Playing to learn

But it's not just about kids playing. It's about involving parents and caregivers, such as daycare and preschool staff. To provide free education opportunities to parents and child care providers, the library has partnered with Oakland County Child Care Council/United Way Early Learning Communities, Oakland Schools Great Start and Early On agencies and Botsford Hospital.

The library has long provided child care centers with resources, including books, DVDs and toys to work with kids to improve literacy and learning. Child care providers also receive a newsletter

three times a year from the library. The centers also receive outreach story times at their facilities.

An added bonus is that child care workers can earn their 10 hours of continuing education through the library. "It's free and in the community," Scott said.

But Farmington area librarians are taking the effort a step further. Parent and child workshops called "Play and Learn with Me, run for 75 minutes and include creative play station so parents and their kids can play and learn together.

Parents will have benefit from a guest expert each week who will provide information on early books and literacy, nutrition, speech and language development, general child development and health.

"Our experts will chat individually with our parents," Scott said. "We will reinforce that a parent is a child's first and best teacher. The sound of parents' voices is the most important sound to a child."

jmaliszews@hometownlife.com | 313-550-8558