

WMUK News

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Kalamazoo library to become a "Family Place"

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http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wmuk/files/2013/05/KPL_Childrens_Room-OP-2.JPG
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Kalamazoo Public Library
KPL's current Children's Room

The [Kalamazoo Public Library's](http://www.kpl.gov) (<http://www.kpl.gov>) main branch downtown is poised to become a "Family Place Library" (<http://www.familyplacelibraries.org>). A renovation project that starts later this month will turn the library's Children's Room into a place where young children and their parents can learn together.

Listen

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KPL's Ann Rohrbaugh and Susan Warner talk about the new "Family Place Library" project

KPL Director Ann Rohrbaugh and Youth Services Director Susan Warner say the "Family Place" project builds on the library's commitment to early childhood education. She says the invitation for the library to apply for a federal grant through the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](http://www.imls.gov/) (<http://www.imls.gov/>) to join the nationwide effort validated its previous work with young kids and their parents.

The Kalamazoo Public Library is among 25 in the Midwest recently accepted for the program. Family Place Library programs are already offered in several other Michigan cities including Grand Rapids and Saginaw. The national project began in the late 1990s on the east and west coasts and is now adding affiliates in other parts of the country. It now has 300 sites in 23 states.

Rohrbaugh says "Family Place" libraries that uses play to help young children learn. KPL Youth Services Director Susan Warner says it is aimed primarily at preschoolers,

especially kids up to the age of three. KPL's revamped Children's Room will have new materials including books and toys designed for that age range. Warner also says new stations will be added where parents and guardians can play with their kids to help them learn during special five-week workshops. It will also have books and other material to help parents and other caregivers work with preschoolers on their education.

Warner says the "Family Place" project will help the Kalamazoo library attract parents and children who aren't using its services now. KPL also plans to strengthen alliances with other groups working on early childhood development and to offer parents access to local experts in child development as well as health and wellness.

Renovation of the KPL Children's Room will start in August and should be completed by the end of the year. The library will also upgrade its reference and local history areas on the second floor of the main branch. Warner says services in all areas will continue while the work is underway but some may be moved temporarily.

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