

Spirit of CHOWAN COUNTY Community

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Library provides learning for all ages and interests

BY JEANETTE WHITE
Correspondent

EDENTON - People looking for help with learning, especially children and young mothers, find a secret weapon when they discover Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library.

During the month of June, 3,698 people walked through the door at the library to take advantage of 23,000 books, audiotapes, videotapes and other services expected at any similar facility.

The library has only two full-time employees, County Librarian Rosalie Boyd and staff member Naomi White, with several part-timers. Michelle Vanterpool works with family outreach and Lee Lolkema as assistant for children programming. Lolkema is a retired educator and school administrator who plans all children's programs for Shepard-Pruden.

The library's annual summer reading program this year sponsored six sessions with more than 130 children in each session. Youth and leaders gather on the waterfront on summer days to have fun, but the gatherings also serve another purpose.

"It keeps the children reading and questioning, it continues what they started during the school year and they enjoy it," Boyd said.

For years the staff has made an effort to visit every day care center in the county, both private and public, annually. This year staff is making 18 visits to day care centers every two weeks to work with about 285 children. This outreach program is funded by Smart Start and Chowan-Gates-Perquimans Partnership for Children.

Children are provided "manipulatives," or games, puzzles, etc., appropriate for the age group. Teachers at the day care centers can request certain materials they would like to borrow for their children and the upstairs children's activity room at the library is loaded with books and materials bought by Smart Start.

Even though the state's budget crunch is swiping at Smart Start, Boyd says the local partnership is working to provide funding to continue the day care program.

"We also make an effort to contact young women with children who may not be coming to the library. With them, Michelle (Vanterpool) does things like model reading for the child...she involves them in what we call emerging literacy when little children are ready to learn how to read...shows young mothers how to do those kinds of things with their child. Most of them have not finished high school and she encourages them to get their GED."

The encouragement of young mothers has been a successful effort and some have gone on to study at College of the Albemarle.

A pre-school story hour is held every Wednesday at 10 a.m. for 2- and 3-year-olds and 11 a.m. for 4- and 5-year-olds.

Part-time employee Joyce White leads a successful program which provides visits to nursing homes, where she sometimes takes family and music.

"Joyce visits with the people, talks with them. Sometimes she takes her own children or people from her family. Sometimes she takes her church choir and they sing, just whatever she comes up with," Boyd said.

The library offers various public workshops each month except during the summer; the latest in June featuring Afri-

can-American genealogy in conjunction with a local church.

"I met a woman whose great-great-grandfather had been a slave in Edenton. He had run away during the Civil War at a time when Union forces were occupying Plymouth...He is buried in her home town, she knew his history, but came in here trying to find the plantation from which he escaped and didn't even have a last name.

"She got interested in the whole genealogy thing and, of course, there are more difficulties with African-American genealogy because of records not being kept properly...She does an excellent lecture, it was an excellent, excellent program. She has written a book and brought that to the workshop."

Another Shepard-Pruden program allows authors from eastern North Carolina to meet their readers, who can get books signed, and Boyd tries to schedule book signings on all but summer months. One workshop after the tragedy of September 11 explained the roots of bitterness people in some countries feel against the United States. A lecture series begins in the fall and will feature poets.

Shepard-Pruden has 11 computers and seven of them are connected to the Internet. The computers stay busy after school and during summer months, giving youth without computers a chance to interact with new technology. The Gates Foundation donated two computers to the library, both loaded with the latest software programs.

To give working families more access, Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library is open from 9:30 a.m. until 8 p.m. Monday and Thursday and three hours Saturday morning.

"We have heavy traffic Saturday mornings, during the school year especially, with parents coming in with their children."

Boyd said there is no way the library could offer so many diverse programs without support of a strong and committed group known as Friends of the Library.

"We have a very strong Friends of the Library group and they are such good support, I don't know what we'd do without them," Boyd said. About 170 families are members and provide funding for such things as food and mile-



Book club members discuss *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Clockwise, from the top are: Hannah Kelsey and her mother, Hannah Winslow, Shelby Bollner, Daeza Riddick and Naomi White, assistant librarian at the Shepard-Pruden Memorial Public Library in downtown Edenton. (Photo courtesy of Glenda Jakubowski, Edenton-Chowan Schools)

Youngest readers form book club with help from public library staff

BY GLENDA JAKUBOWSKI
Edenton-Chowan Schools

Oprah's Book Club might be more famous, but the book club begun in White Oak School teacher Elizabeth Hathorn's first-grade class may end up with more staying power — with the help of the Shepard-Pruden Library, the book club is going strong even through summer vacation.

Whether school's in or out, Chowan County's public library is never at a loss for young readers, according to librarian Rosalie Boyd. More than 200 children, for example, signed up for the library's summer reading program this year.

The book club is something

new. Hathorn started the book club in her classroom last year after noticing how much her students loved discussing the books they read.

"I thought the book club would be a way to develop that interest and camaraderie," Hathorn said. "It could develop into something that could last forever."

The interest has certainly outlasted the school year. As the summer drew near, Hathorn approached Boyd with the idea of continuing the book club at the library during vacation. The dynamics of the club are similar to that of an adult book club; each child has a copy of the same book, which they all read together. Children who aren't readers yet can still

follow along as the book is read out loud. After reading the book, the children are asked questions to stimulate discussions, and they also have the chance to make a written or illustrated response to the story.

"Rosalie just took the ball and ran with it," Hathorn said. "I'm impressed with how she reaches out to the community."

During one such gathering, "community" was the apt word for the book clubbers. Some were former students of Hathorn's. Others heard about the club and decided it was just the thing. One child, as eager a participant, as any, officially joins the Edenton-Chowan Schools family for the 2002-03 school year, when she starts kindergarten.

The book of the week on this

day was *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Assistant librarian Naomi White read the book out loud while the book clubbers followed along. They then discussed important aspects of the story such as the merits of the billy goat strategies for crossing the bridge, which character they liked best, and whether or not the troll got what he deserved. They also discussed what might happen after the last page had been turned.

"The troll drowned," said one child. "He was eaten by a great white shark," said another. All agreed that the Billy Goats Gruff did indeed live happily ever after.

And all agreed they would be back next week to discuss another literary masterpiece.



The Balloon Lady is one of the Summer Reading Program's most popular (and colorful) attractions. Sessions take place in the waterfront park across the street from the Shepard-Pruden Public Library. (Chowan Herald file photo)

age for visiting authors. Boyd said the group fills in many gaps not covered by regular funding.

Friends of the Library's latest bi-annual fundraiser gar-

nered \$10,000 to revamp the children's section of the library. The group has underwritten programs and purchased computers, book racks, blinds and audiotapes, which

Boyd says are especially helpful for children who don't read well.

A conversation with the county librarian shows that she and her staff want the

public to share every resource Shepard-Pruden has to offer and she believes work with children is very special.

"It might be our most important thing," Boyd said. "Anyone who reads early will continue to read."



These youngsters show off colorful ensembles during a visit from the Balloon Lady during the Shepard-Pruden Library's Summer Reading Program. Other services offered by the library for area children include a preschool story hour every Wednesday for the younger children. The library also offers a number public workshops and book-signings featuring North Carolina authors. Librarian Rosalie Boyd credits the Friends of the Library's strong support with making many of these activities possible.