

LIBRARY SUMMER PROGRAMS



Rich Cooley/Daily photos

Above, William Richards, 4, of Woodstock, reacts to The Loud Poetry Guy at the Shenandoah County Library on Tuesday. Below, Shenandoah County children's librarian Erica Hepner speaks during a recent Tuesday program at the county library in Edinburg.

Libraries offer summer fun

By Josette Keelor

EDINBURG — Libraries are no longer the silent, no-talking zones they used to be, and recent additions at Shenandoah County Library are helping redefine what a library should be to its community.

With a month still to go in the Shenandoah County Library's summer reading program Read to the Rhythm, Children's Librarian Erica Hepner is excited for what's to come.

"I have to say, it's summertime

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ERICA HEPNER, SHENANDOAH COUNTY CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN

and we're busy," she said.

"[But] the library is so much more than just books," Hepner

said. "It's really a community center. And it's a place where families come to spend time together."

Tuesday, at a reading by James Scott, The Loud Poetry Guy, children giggled and commented on the silly stories Scott told.

Starting off with some Shel Silverstein, Scott, of Chesapeake, also read from his own books of poems, "Louder!" and "Louder Two," recalling how his

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childhood inspired the idea of pud muddles — a cleaner kind of mud puddle, which mothers might not be so quick to dismiss as a legitimate form of childhood enjoyment.

Pud muddles are “paper thin water,” he explained — or so he used to think before he tried jumping into one.

“Once you get dirty enough, you can take a pud muddle everywhere,” he exclaimed, earning himself an “ew” from enthralled listeners.

Last week, the library hosted children’s yoga, and on Thursday Karen Thomas introduced the little ones to ballroom dancing. On Aug. 4 the Wildlife Center of Virginia will lead the “You Are What You Eat” program about food chains.

The summer reading program’s musical finale will be on Aug. 13 and its finale picnic for reading club members on Aug. 20.

New to the library April 15, Hepner is no stranger to children’s educational programs. A graphic designer with a background in early childhood education, she taught for three years at the Woodstock Head Start Program.

Also new are circulation supervisor Sarah Hutchinson, who has 20



Rich Cooley/Daily

James Scott, The Loud Poetry Guy, performs at the Shenandoah County Library on Tuesday during a children’s program.

years of library experience in Henrico County and at Central Rappahannock Regional Library, and archivist Zach Hottle, who has helped revive a library position cut from the county budget five years ago.

Until now, volunteers filled the library’s need for an archivist to help residents research family and county records. But community interest in how the library might greater benefit the community fueled its return, said Director Robert “Sandy” Whitesides.

The library recently revived its Foundation Directory Online, a tool for nonprofits, small businesses and individuals to identify grant-funding opportunities.

Technology, too, has shaped the library, bringing Wii and Xbox games

to a recently renovated teen room and iPads to the library reading experience. Downloadable books are available in digital and audio format, and Whitesides said upcoming plans include a Maker-Space craft table and other ways of complementing what students are learning in school.

“It’s on the horizon,” he said.

Undeniably, summer is the library’s boom season, bringing out community members usually too busy to visit much during the school year. But while he hopes they’ll stick around into the fall, he said he’s glad to be a part of everyone’s high-flying warm-weather plans.

“They’re looking for a place to land, and luckily they do land here,” he said. “It’s an exciting time to be in the library.”