

Library is destination for kids and teens to stay cool and have fun this summer



Local students and their families showed off their green thumbs last week as the Aurora Public Library hosted a summer launch for its new Seed Library.

Held on Wednesday, July 8, it was a chance for people to bring in their plants, swap them for others, borrow seeds to start a new seedling of their own, and bring some seeds into the collection to help pay it forward.

If young gardeners were able to show off what makes their garden grow, there are plenty more opportunities for personal growth ? and memorable fun ? as the Aurora Public Library becomes a summer destination for youth once again.

APL CEO Jodi Marr describes the Library as a ?hip hub for teens and children now that school is out ? and for all ages.? The fact that it's air conditioned in what's turned out to be a summer of heatwaves only sweetens the deal.

Summer is always a busy time at APL and the Library has a full range of activities and resources for people of all ages, including their Friendly Chess Tournament drop-in every Monday, traditional reading clubs, and even the opportunity to learn from the professionals how to make shawarma.

?Our main thing for summer for children is that it always be fun,? says Polly Ross-Tyrrell, Manager of Customer Opportunity for the Aurora Public Library. ?Our menu of programs is fairly diverse. We have art, we have science, we have Maker activities, very hands-on activities ? and, of course, we have book-focused activities.?

These activities vary from day to day, but some days of the week have specific themes to help guide patrons through all the Library has to offer.

Maker Mondays, for instance, is perennially popular ? as are Fantastic Fridays.

?On Maker Mondays, they'll get to go home with something they made just the way they wanted to,? says Ross-Tyrrell. ?We have Fantastic Fridays, which is everything from monsters and dragons to fairy tales, but the most important thing is we want it to be fun for kids. We want to make it fun and enriching for their lives; whether they are coming to learn science or seek a fun explosion, they will learn things. If they are coming to our Reading Adventures, our book-focused program, they will learn some great books to check out on their way out.

‘We want to meet children where they are. For teens, we meet them around volunteer hours, mostly. We know that’s what teens want for the summer, so that’s what we’re here to give them. We have lots of opportunities; they can come help out with the children’s programs, they can come run the summer reading desk, and they can sign up for various other things.’

The Summer Reading desk is sure to be a busy spot through July, August, and into September, as reading programs for youth of all ages help them prepare for the school year ahead.

‘We have a Teen Summer Challenge where they can participate in different activities, check out books, and earn tickets towards some really cool prizes, and we also have our TD Summer Reading Club for Children, and our Read and Bead,’ says Ross-Tyrrell, noting they have added some ‘really, really fun prizes’ into the mix.

‘We launched Read and Bead about seven years ago where children read for an hour and they get a bead to put on their necklace. It’s a concrete way for them to see how many hours they’ve read and the really little kids like it – so do our older kids – and at 10 hours of reading they can pick a prize from our prize pack. At 20 hours of reading, they can pick a free book, and then the top three readers will get bigger prizes. The feedback from where we go into the schools in June is so positive, they’re so excited about it. Aurora really shows up for this program and I think it really makes a difference – we all love it, too. We have a staff version and we Read and Bead along with the kids and have a lot of fun.’

At the end of the day, APL’s summer programs aren’t simply focused on words on a page, but providing a ‘whole experience’ for local youth, including a partnership with Ka-Ba-Ba, a restaurant on Yonge Street, just south of Wellington, where kids can register for a spot to learn how to make their own signature shawarma.

‘We try so hard to offer a well-rounded experience for children,’ says Ross-Tyrrell. ‘If they come to everything, I think they really will step forward a little in their development. If they read lots, they won’t get behind when they go back to school. That’s, of course, a huge part of summer reading club – preventing the fear of ‘summer slide,’ where you end up in Grade 3 reading when you were in Grade 4 reading when you left school. We want to help them explore the world. And if even five or 10 of the hundreds of children who come through our doors go, ‘Oh, that’s something I didn’t know,’ ‘That’s really cool,’ or ‘I want to learn more about that,’ that’s a reward for us.’

For a full roster of summer programs at the Aurora Public Library, visit aurorapl.ca.

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