

Summer Reading Program 2019
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It's May, time for warm winds, longer periods of daylight, and eventually summer break. The library has been a busy place as of late. We have spent all of late winter and early spring preparing for the Summer Reading Program. As I write this in the first week of May, we are finalizing the last of details and visiting with and hosting many classes here at the library to promote the program. It's interesting to me that we spend more time with the kids each spring talking about the summer reading program each year than with parents. So here's a little bit of what we mention at those school visits.

I usually start by asking the students why libraries host summer reading programs each year. I get lots of answers to this question. Usually something along the lines of; "Because you're a librarian." Meaning I'm always pushing books on people. And they're not wrong, but that's not the only reason. The summer slide, or summer learning loss, is real. And although recent research suggests it may be a negligible loss for most students. I still think it's worth talking about. If by encouraging your child to reading just twenty minutes a day we help your child feel more successful when they go back to school, it's worth it. I also like to tell them about something my mother told me when I was learning to read. She told me that if I learned to read, I could learn to do anything. Having taught myself to sew, quilt, and playing the guitar, I know this to be true. I am an excellent quilter, and good at home sewing, but I'm not very good at playing the guitar. That's my fault for not practicing much, which leads me to my second point.

I then ask the question, "Who here was born knowing how to read?" I always get one or two students that raise their hand. It's a trick question; of course, reading is a skill that all of us learn. Very much like walking, many of our cognitive and motor skill need to be ready and functioning for us to understand the process and actual take that first step or sound out the first word. And like learning to walk, some children learn at much faster than the rest of us. No matter the pace it takes practice. Practice is an important element in the process. The same is true for all skills. I like to see if the kids have a favorite professional athlete. Some do, and some don't. I lived in Northeast Ohio all of my life before moving here, so my go to has always been LeBron James. I like to have the kids imagine what would happen if LeBron decided to spend his off season playing video games and eating junk food. Once a second grader yelled out, "He'd get fat!" I agree, LeBron would likely put on a few pounds, his muscles would atrophy a bit and it would make it hard for him to get back into shape at the start of the new season. Reading is like that too. We need to practice daily if we are to maintain those skills, or improve.

The summer reading program is way for the library to help with this practice. It gives the kids little incentives to encourage them to read each day. This year's theme is, "A

Universe of Stories". The program runs from June 10th to July 31st this year. Registration for the program will be in person at the library only, and will begin when we open at 9:30 a.m. Monday, June 10th. For the families that register that day, the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame and the Brown County Historical Society will generously be donating their time to allow families to visit both institutions for free on that day only from noon to 4:00 p.m. The BCHS will also be giving away tickets for a free bag of popcorn from their vintage popcorn wagon while they are open on June 10th. The library will be hosting an opening day celebration from 1 to 3 p.m. on June 10th, in the Children's room. This will include special games, prizes, and face painting. . Please stop by to say hello, register for the summer reading program, and have a bit of fun.

The program itself is a six week self-guided program in which the kids can read any book for a certain amount of time each day or a certain number of books each week throughout the program. All the materials and an explanation of how to complete the program will be given when you register. A brochure of activities planned for the summer will be available at the library soon. Registration for programs scheduled for June will not begin until June 1st. Look for information regarding events on the New Ulm Public Library website and our Facebook page, or give us a call at (507) 359-8331 ext. 182 for more information.