

# Hueneme Pilot

## The Hometown Newspaper for Channel Islands Harbor the Beach Communities and Port Hueneme

### Early literacy sets foundation to build learning

*Smart Car buyers get stares on street, new camaraderie among like-minded*

**By Sharon Dykstra**

Youth Librarian

Ray D. Prueter Library

Current scientific research indicates that it is never too early to prepare children for success as readers.

This preparation begins long before they start school. Early literacy is everything a child knows about reading and writing before they can actually read or write.

Early literacy happens when a family reads aloud to a baby before birth, when a baby plays with (and even chews on) a book, when a toddler asks for a favorite book to be read over and over (and over and over), when a preschooler asks (and answers) question after question about a story, and when a child “reads” a book to you from memory.

What fosters early literacy in young children? Fun, and lots of it! The most important thing is providing a fun, verbal and stimulating atmosphere. The focus should be on offering a child plenty of opportunities to talk and be listened to, to read and be read to, and to sing and be sung to.

Talking, playing, singing and reading with a child stimulates brain growth and forms the connections that become the building blocks for reading. Research shows that reading aloud to a child every day increases his/her brain’s capacity for language and literacy skills, and is the best way to prepare a child to read.

Why does this matter? We live in a world where a well-educated populace is essential to our nation’s health and prosperity. Children who are better prepared to read have an easier time learning to read. Children who have an easier time learning to read, enjoy reading, and read well tend to do better in school. Children who perform well in school are more likely to become high school graduates and attend college.

Early literacy sets the foundation upon which all further learning is built. Providing early literacy experiences for young children today is a worthwhile investment in our future.

The Ray D. Prueter Library has long contributed to the fostering of early literacy skills in young children. Since January 2002, the library has been a recipient of Proposition 10/First5 grant monies through the South Oxnard/Port Hueneme Neighborhoods for Learning.

These grant funds allow the library to offer nine additional hours of service every week, four weekly early-literacy story times, three monthly community outreach programs and 12 annual workshops which provide early literacy education to parents/caregivers by supplying them with tools they can use to succeed as their child’s first teacher.



During the last seven years, more than 42,000 children and their families have been served through these story times, community outreach programs and workshops.

The Prueter Library receives Prop 10/First5/NfL funding through the end of June 2009. However, it is unclear whether grant funding will be continued for the July 2009 to June 2010 fiscal year.

California voters are being asked in the May 19 Statewide Special Election to consider Proposition 1D, which would divert monies from Proposition 10/First5 to cover other state expenditures, leaving a reduced amount of funds available for local First5 Commissions to distribute to early learning programs, such as those offered by local preschools, day care providers, and the library.

We sincerely hope that early childhood development and literacy remains a top priority for all our citizens. Although the future library offerings of early literacy story times, outreach, workshops and extended hours of service are uncertain, the Prueter Library will always be committed to helping prepare young children for future reading success and in becoming imaginative, motivated and self-confident learners.