

HPL Children's Room Stories

Mary Ellen Salata, HPL Patron, Hubbard, Ohio, August 2020:

“We moved to Hubbard in 1973. My first experiences with the Hubbard Public Library (HPL) were motivated by my being pregnant and my membership in the Hubbard La Leche League group. La Leche is an international organization dedicated to “good mothering through breastfeeding.” La Leche works through small groups which help women with mother-to-mother support, encouragement, up-to-date information and education about breastfeeding. These groups have leaders who are trained and certified.

I was a member of a La Leche group, and later I obtained the training to be a certified leader. As I did research about breastfeeding, the librarians at HPL assisted me with my research and helped me remain well-informed. Later, the Hubbard LLL (La Leche League) group became a resource for the community, and HPL helped spread the information about our non-profit group to mothers needing this support and information. LLL also donated books and information sheets to HPL.

As I learned more about HPL, I became involved in the programs and activities offered in the Children's Room. I have three sons, Michael, Edward and Lawrence. When they became toddlers, our family became involved in the numerous and divers activities offered for their age level.

I recall the boys sitting on cushions in the Storytime Room. They were fascinated with the various books the librarians read and the hands-on activities and programs presented. The librarians made learning fun! My boys frequently asked “Is today library day?” The librarians also reinforced the values we were teaching at home, such as putting away toys and things used in their proper place when done with them.

The boys loved the storytelling. As we didn't have family in Hubbard, we relied on our church, LLL, HPL and the community to be our family. My boys loved going to HPL. They always had fun at HPL, and they looked forward to checking-out the books they chose. They were proud that they could check-out up to 10 books each! I'm still proud to say that, over the many years we visited HPL, my boys only ever 'lost' one book. That book was later found among their own book collection.

As our boys grew, the programs in the Children's Room also grew and evolved. As toddlers, the song and motion programs helped my boys with mobility and learning. My youngest, Lawrence, was a social butterfly. Lawrence enjoyed interacting with other children, especially meeting other 'little people' like himself.

We discovered books-on-cassettes. The cassettes were paired with a corresponding book. As we listened to the story on the cassette, the player would 'beep,' prompting you to turn the page. Turning the page was the boys' part. They loved this. Later, this became a night-time ritual. I would put the cassette into the player, and as they would get quiet to listen, they would be asleep. They listened to these cassettes over and over. Nap-time was also reading time. We have a double rocker. We would rock, I'd read, and soon they would be asleep.

The first magazine that they boys enjoyed was “Highlites.” This magazine contained stories, hidden pictures, puzzles and Rebus stories. These Rebus stories used an object/picture, for example, a picture of a ‘truck.’ Next, that picture became a picture of a ‘red truck.’ Next, the picture was replaced by the words ‘red truck,’ highlighted in red. Lastly, the words ‘red truck’ were printed like the rest of the words in the story. As the boys followed the story, I prompted them to read their part, the ‘red truck.’ The boys would proudly say, “I’m reading, mom!”

This helped my sons to want to read, to learn to read, and to love reading. Later, we even had our own subscription so that we could travel with the magazine.

We lived only a block from HPL. My sons and I would walk to HPL and spend lots of quality time there. I always accompanied them as I, too, enjoyed HPL. The librarians knew us by name; we were treated as part of the family. As my sons grew older, there were always new and age-appropriate programs. HPL has programs for children of all ages, including adults.

Later, as the boys needed books or information for school, the librarians were always very helpful. The librarians would say “I’ll go with you to help you find what you need.” These were wonderful, welcomed words of assistance and empowerment.

The displays in the Children’s Room changed regularly and were always intriguing and engaging. My sons enjoyed the train which circled near the ceiling in the main room of Children’s Room space and then disappear into the StoryTime Room and reappear. Summer Reading activities were creative, innovative, and interactive. There were verbal book reports, quizzes, scavenger hunts, crafts, and much more. The librarians were always welcoming and encouraging to all the boys and girls.

The toys and craft supplies used were always clean. The children were encouraged to clean-up after activities were completed, which help to reinforce what I was teaching at home. The boys particularly enjoyed and had great fun dumping and putting together the many wooden puzzles available.

Later, as they each became old enough and could print their names, they were able to get their own library cards. They were able to check-out the books they chose on their own card. They were so proud to have a library card like mommy’s.

Later, the Summer Reading program extended to my grandchildren Lauren, Ella and Thomas participate in the Children’s Room Summer Reading programs. One of the experiments I fondly remember is the boat and the pennies. The children were to shape a boat out of aluminum foil, then drop pennies into it until it sank. They could remake/reshape the boat, drop the pennies into the boat in different patterns trying to get the most pennies in before it sank. This became quite a fun competition. Another experiment was splitting a stalk of celery, placing each half of the stem into glasses of water colored with food coloring. Later, at home, we put white flowers in the food colored water and watched to see if the flower would change color. Clearly, they were thinking, learning, and problem-solving as a result of these activities.

These projects led to learning how and why these changes happened. Thomas would repeat the experiments over and over. And Ella, to this day, loves science. She is in the 7th grade.

My three boys and my three grandchildren are all avid readers. I believe HPL and its Children's Room had a big part in this.

In brief summary, HPL and its Children's programs have played a huge role in our lives, all three generations of my family. Together, we have expanded our horizons in numerous, diverse, positive and encouraging ways. In my own case, the librarians at HPL are also helping me learn about computers. I volunteer at HPL in different capacities, and I am currently using my growing computer skills to choose books for home bound patrons who receive books from the library delivered to them once a month.

“Thank you, HPL, for all the ways you have helped me and my family grow, learn and continue to READ!”

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