

Fun and games at West Portal library

WEST PORTAL

Toddlers get hooked on books through special program

BY JEANETTE GOOD

Neighborhood Correspondent

The library may not be considered a place to sing, laugh, or jump up and down, but if that helps children learn to love books, some librarians are willing to make exceptions.

For about 10 years, the West Portal Branch Library has hosted a special time, called Lapsit, for parents and toddlers to enjoy rhymes, songs, movies, simple puppet shows, and exploration of the library.

"It's a warm introduction to the library for children," senior children's librarian Ruth Maginnis said. "They get the idea that this is a place where the staff likes them and welcomes them. We want to show them that books can be fun. And a lot of parents get their introduction to the library through their kids."

Maginnis, who has been entertaining toddlers in the library for about seven years, said that when she took over the library's Saturday morning program, which is directed at children age 3 and under, she wasn't convinced that there was a need for it.

As time has passed, though, she said her attitude has changed.

"It's supposed to be interactive with the parents," she said. "And parents can meet other parents, which is important. It breaks isolation."

Wanda Chang has two children who frequently attend the program.

"It's a social hour for them," she said. "And it reinforces the belief that books are fun."

Connie Veilleux, who brings her 2-year-old niece to the program almost every week, said the little girl is getting to know other children from the program and often talks about them at home.

"She really likes it," Veilleux said. "She's learning vocabulary and also meeting other children."

Parents sing out

Maginnis said that sometimes parents or guardians seem to enjoy the program at least as much as the children do.

"It's one of the few times, out of church, where adults can sing and it's OK," she said. "Some people who are really reserved sing really loud or do the hokey-pokey and I think, 'This person really needed to let loose.'"

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PHOTO: JESSICA BRANDI LIFLAND

FAMILY FUN: Wanda Chang (seated, center) sings with her children Lauren and Evan Chang at a Saturday morning library program. Imah Chavez (far left) stands watching, while Yan Yan Hui sits absorbed in a book.

LIBRARY: Introducing children to books

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Maginnis, who has watched many toddlers grow into regular library users, said she can see the difference between children who were introduced to the library at a very young age and those who were not.

"It does make a lot of difference in how kids feel about the library," she said. "It's like it's their library. I'm their librarian."

She also said the Lapsit program encourages parents to use books with their children at a much earlier age.

Lapsit sessions with Maginnis, said she enjoys the program because "the stuff is fresh with little kids. It's new to them."

But, she said, a person has to have a thick skin to perform in front of the young audiences.

"You'd be in a huff all the time if you were upset by kids not paying

attention," Dezurick said.

Maginnis agreed, laughing about the fact that she is often more concerned with what the parents will think of her performances than the children.

"The kids aren't too judgmental. The parents are the ones you worry about," she said.

Dedicated participants

Both librarians agreed that the program, which boasts many "regulars" and return visitors, is a success.

Maginnis guessed that a lot of her regulars would be disappointed if the library didn't have the Lapsit program.

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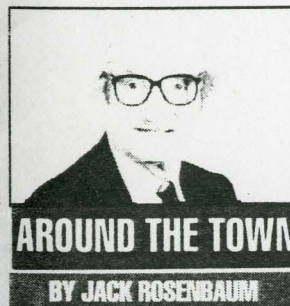
library habit," she said. "It's sort of educational, but mostly it's fun." Chang agreed.

"It's fun," she said. "Why else would you get up and out at 10:30 on a Saturday morning?"

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No slack in free food line

ITEM-ZING ... You keep reading that the economy here is on the rebound, but you'd never know it from the lines for the free meals served



AROUND THE TOWN

BY JACK ROSENBAUM

daily at St. Anthony's and Glide Memorial.

Betty Lee confesses to a most embarrassing moment. She told a door-to-door collector for a charity she couldn't talk because she was on the phone. Just then her phone rang. Betty recovered neatly: "Omigosh, there goes the other one."

Puzzle: A state senator was recently lambasted and quickly apologized for using the diminutive of "Japanese." But TV continually revives anti-Japanese WWII movies with the forbidden word. Obviously without protest.

Begging is still a "thriving" industry and is on the increase now that cops apparently have quit handing out citations. The other afternoon, talk-show host Ronn Owens, strolling on upper-middle-class Union Street with his two little daughters, was panhandled four times in one block, once aggressively.

SHOW BIZ ... Frank Sinatra Jr., performing at the

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Art auction raises funds to fight child abuse

SUNSET DISTRICT

Proceeds to benefit center for survivors of abuse

BY JEANETTE GOOD
Neighborhood Correspondent

Artists from the Bay Area and beyond have donated more than 100 pieces of work to help a Sunset District center serve survivors of child abuse.

The Norma J. Morris Center, located at 2306 Taraval Street for nearly five years, will benefit from a silent auction of the donated pieces this weekend. The center provides services and resources for survivors of child abuse.

"It should be a fun event," executive director of the center George Bilotta said. "All money procured will go to the center. We have our eye

on this becoming an annual event."

Bilotta said that in the past, the center has done the majority of its fund-raising through direct mailing.

"We're trying a new idea. This is our first try at an art auction," Bilotta said.

The auction will wrap up a month's worth of events, including conferences and survivor art exhibits, in recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, Bilotta said. But he emphasized that the auction will be a "totally separate event."

"Most survivor art doesn't sell," he said, referring to the "intense" nature of such work. He said the pieces that will be available this weekend, which include paintings, jewelry, sculptures, and wood pieces, are geared toward a wider audience.

"It's what people would want in their homes," he said.

Eileen McClean Baker, who procured many of the pieces for the auction, said artists have been anxious to be involved in what they see

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Getting their attention

Sharon Dezurick, who leads the

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