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Big things in store at the Canton Library

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After a summer filled with fun activities, Children's Librarian Anne Hodges is teaming up with recent hire Jason Sharp to introduce a series of new programs for local youth at the Canton Public Library this fall.

"We've got a lot planned," said Sharp, who hails from Memphis.



Legos are just one of the ways organizers are getting kids through the doors of the library.

He and Hodges will share the position of Children's Librarian in Canton, but Sharp will also serve as the Children's Programming Coordinator for the Madison County Library System. He plans to use technology to increase literacy in the area.

"We had a lot of success incorporating technology into the library programs," Sharp said, noting that digital story times have been a particular success in the past. "This isn't a replacement for literacy. We still do a traditional story time, but we find ways of incorporating technology."

Sharp also intends to offer coding workshops and engineering programs geared towards teenagers. The engineering program alone will combine Legos, Minecraft, and other mediums into a single event.

The team hopes to add iPads to their list of electronic resources in order to put the stars, quite literally, within students' reach.

"SkyView uses augmented reality so that you can do a lecture on astronomy and it shows you what the sky would look like while you're indoors," Sharp said. With the touch of a button, students will be able to project the contents of the night sky onto the ceiling of the library. The possibilities will be endless.

The two story brick building is already home countless resources. Hodges has spent the past few years reaching out to local childcare facilities to make sure that these resources are readily available to all.

She has developed strong partnerships with the Canton Discover Center, Community Pride Head Start, and others.

"I'm hoping to expand this program by one or two daycares this coming year," she said.

Nichols Middle School has a book club based at the Canton Public Library.

"They have met several times throughout the year at the library, and we try to have different things that interest them," she said. "We have them come in and make suggestions on what we need to have in the library, and we'll purchase the selected books."

Hodges hosted two magicians earlier this summer in conjunction with the other branches of the library system; however, she was the only Children's Librarian to offer a presentation by the Puppet Art Theater Group.

"They came and did two puppet shows here at Canton," Hodges said. "They were very well attended, and not just children came. Adults in the community made a point to come as well."

Canton strayed from the county-wide superhero theme during story times, focusing instead on inspired weekly topics for children from three to five.

Winter in July kept children's minds fresh and sharp while one week's monster theme ushered the young audience into an entirely different world.

According to Hodges, preparation for the summer reading extravaganza begins in October and continues for the next nine months.

This summer was the best to date. "I was really pleased with the turnout we had from Canton," Hodges said. "We got some new kids involved, and the whole program went really well." Since the summer events were such a hit, Hodges will continue offering Lego programs into the fall.

The Canton Public Library welcomes all members of the community, and programs for adults are the specialty of Branch Manager Christine Greenwood.

"We offered a program called Quest for Health," Greenwood said. "Basically, it's holistic alternative to prescription medicine."

At the first session, local doctors offered tips on healthy eating habits, disease prevention, and ways to boost the immune system. Part two of the program will take place later this month.

Currently, Greenwood is leading a joint book sale between Canton and Camden that will continue until Aug. 15.

"We have our DVDs, books, and computers for public use," Hodges concluded.

"Everything is totally free, and we like to stress that. September is national library sign up month and we'd love to have hundreds of new users."