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Summer success

Flora library's reading program serves nearly 900

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The past and present collided at the Flora Public Library this summer when Children's Specialist Melba Johnson introduced patrons to superheroes from the legendary Johnny Appleseed to Flora's own police officers.



Maxine, the resident lady bug and summer helper.

"We at the Flora Public Library have had an exceptional Summer Reading Program with record attendance," said Johnson, who offered programming for just under 900 children during the summer months. "As Children's Specialist, I had so much fun, and I feel we taught the children some important things."

"The kids really enjoyed it," Branch Manager Presley Posey agreed.

The two used a variety of programs to show children, teenagers, and even adults that not all heroes wear capes.

In June, the library hosted a magician, a krypton race, superhero mask designing, soldier camouflage making, acting classes, and several other themed events.

Officer Pat Mack from the Flora Police Department spoke on public safety and educated children on the tools of the trade. Shortly afterwards, a hero from the past visited Flora. Johnny Appleseed, the pioneer nurseryman known for introducing apple trees throughout America, wore a mush pot on his head as he walked barefoot through the halls greeting children.

"It was a wonderful summer. In addition to all that, we had more Legos, another magician, sock puppet hero making, a visit from a life-size Corduroy, and a blowout finale," Johnson said. Corduroy, a stuffed bear, came to life for the children of Flora in an afternoon filled with stories and photo shoots.

Although heroes such as soldiers, parents, rescue dogs, and librarians were recognized throughout the summer, the children themselves shone the brightest. "We gave out about 80 prizes," Johnson said. "We named our big reading challenge winners near the end of July. The younger winner won a Lego set and other fun things; the teen winner won a bag full of coupons and gift certificates."

Flora also offered a button making event for all ages. "That was a full house," Johnson said. A total of 60 students gathered to make buttons using a machine specially purchased for

the event.

The reading program ended on a high note with a final summer celebration. Children caught prizes with fishing poles and received a visit from a life-sized lady bug. "She passed out little magnets that she made with lady bugs on them," Johnson said.

The best was still to come. Johnson filled three bags full of balloons and stuffed each with treats. The balloons were then released into the room and the result was a tremendous amount of noise, excitement, and candy.

Summer is ending, but the fun will not cease. "We will continue to have reading every week for the children as the year goes on," Posey said. Rising Readers, a weekly interactive story time for children three to five, will remain a staple.

"We act out books," Posey described the program.

Or, as Johnson said, "We get the children in the room and get the wiggles out. We do our favorite songs and move to them." Next, she breaks out the books. After a short story and a second movement activity, the reading session closes with sticker time.

The team is currently working on fall programming for both children and adults from on-site programs at local head starts to health checks and historical meetings.