

## Family literacy program aims to be fun, encouraging

By **RICHARD KHAVKINE**  
 Staff Writer

**NEW BRUNSWICK** — Bidding to raise awareness among parents on the role they play in their child's intellectual development, the city's Free Public Library is developing a collection of family literacy materials.

Tied in with that initiative, the library this week will host two programs, both facilitated by reading specialist Adina Marcus, a retired East Brunswick Public Schools teacher.

The purpose of the family literacy program and collection is to promote and support literacy skills among local youth, said library associate Laura Szalaj, who is coordinating the programs.

"What we're trying to do is to encourage children to become literate and enjoy reading," Szalaj said.

Scholarly surveys and school test results, as well anecdotal evidence, she said, suggests children's reading habits have declined at a much greater rate than that of the adult population.

According to a National Endowment for the Arts survey re-

leased last year, less than one-third of 13-year-olds are daily readers, a 14 percent decline from 20 years earlier.

The survey noted a few trends, notably that a historical decline in voluntary reading rates among teenagers and young adults continues, as has a gradual worsening of reading skills among older teens.

The National Endowment for the Arts survey, "To Read or Not To Read" (<http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf>), found that levels of leisure reading and reading comprehension goes hand-in-hand with academic, professional and other successes.

The first program will take place at 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, at the Bilingual Parents' Council meeting in the auditorium of Roosevelt Elementary School at 83 Livingston Ave.

The program will be presented again at 11 a.m. Friday, Nov. 21, at the library, 60 Livingston Ave. English-to-Spanish translation will be available at Thursday's presentation only.

The programs are being funded through a \$2,000 grant from city-based Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey. The city library is among six others state-

wide receiving funds funneled from the federal Department of Education

Another Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey grant, this one for \$2,500, has helped the library develop a collection of about 100 family literacy materials for parents and educators. Around 25 percent of the collection is in Spanish. Composed mostly of books, the collection also includes DVDs and CDs.

"We should have the collection up by January at the latest," Szalaj said.

The materials can be requested and checked out in the same manner as other library items.

Parents attending the programs will receive a literacy guide based on the presentation and an English-Spanish children's book. Both programs are free and open to the public.

More information about the family literacy programs is available by calling 732-745-5108, Ext. 20. More information about the family literacy collection is available by calling 732-745-5108, Ext. 15.

□ *Richard Khavkine: 732-565-7263; [rkhavkine@MyCentralJersey.com](mailto:rkhavkine@MyCentralJersey.com)*

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