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New Librarian has Big Plans for Kids

By Sophie Braccini



Melanie McCallum gives information to a young reader at the Moraga library Photo Sophie Braccini

July the fun was just kicked off by the Alex Ramon Magic Show, which McCallum was able to get for free.

SaveNature.org will bring its Insect Discovery Lab to Moraga on July 21st at 4:00 p.m. "I chose them because they are hands-on science," says the librarian, "children will be able to discover, experience, and touch a wide variety of insects and other arthropods." The presentation is for age 4 to 12 and requires pre-registration since the number is limited to 24 participating kids.

On August 18 at 4:00 p.m., the Moraga library will offer a Traditional African Dance presentation/workshop for families with artist Nana-Dictta Graves. Participants will learn basic West African dance, as well as songs and games of West Africa.

All youth service librarians in Contra Costa share a resource file where they record their feedback about different performers. "I also talk a lot with parents, either at my desk in the children's section of the library, or after presentations," says McCallum, "I like to get their direct feedback and suggestions." That's how the young librarian tested her idea to bring yoga for kids age 2 to 5 to the library in the fall.

During the summer, she will read weekly for a young audience (age 6 months-7 years) during the popular Summer Story Time, and she is a resource for those participating in the Kids Summer Reading Festival that runs all summer and awards prizes to kids who read (or are read to) from age 2 to 5th grade; there's even a Babies Summer Reading Festival (birth to 24 months).

McCallum wishes that more tweens and teens would come to the Moraga library. "Young kids love books," she says, "but there is a transitional age, around 10 to 13, where it is more difficult for them to stay engaged. We have a very extensive teen book collection that they should come and check out."

For information on the Moraga library's summer event schedule go to <http://ccclib.org/locations/moraga.html>.

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A few months ago Melanie McCallum replaced Moraga Youth Services Librarian Sandy Steiner, who retired last year. McCallum is in charge of making the reading and literacy experience as enticing as possible for newborns to teens, in a community that places a high value on getting their kids to read voraciously.

"Moraga families have a special interest in literature for their kids," says McCallum, "we track book circulation and event attendance, and that gives us a good indication of the level of interest."

McCallum worked in the County library system for eight years before coming to Moraga. Some of her early experience was as a librarian in the Martinez Juvenile Hall. "There were a few times when I cried on my way home," remembers McCallum, "it was very draining emotionally, but extremely rewarding."

"Moraga is a great place to be," says McCallum, "I have a special interest in early literacy and am always on the look-out for programs that mix education and entertainment."

The Friends of the Moraga Library fund the activity program in Moraga and give \$200-\$300 a month to McCallum for activities. In