

New Children's Librarian at Lafayette Library and Learning Center

By Cathy Tyson



Jenna Skinner and her special friend Buck Buck in the Children's section of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Photo Cathy Tyson

“Being a children's librarian is the best job in the world, and I want them (young patrons) to know how much I love being here!” said new Youth Services Librarian Jenna Skinner. Before moving on to details of her new job, I have to meet Buck Buck, “she’s my ambassador,” the well behaved and non-threatening chicken helps little ones feel more comfortable during story time.

With a gentle manner, resemblance to Snow White, and a pitch perfect “inside” voice Skinner is the newest addition to the Lafayette Library and Learning Center staff. She replaces popular kids’ librarian Miss Donna who retired after sixteen years with the County Library system.

“We feel so fortunate to have Jenna join our library team, especially on the heels of the fabulous Miss Donna,” said Susan Weaver, Senior Community Library Manager. “Jenna is so creative, knowledgeable and passionate about reading and children, that even in the short time she’s been with us, she’s brought so much to our story times and programs.”

Skinner is impressed with the enthusiasm of kids for their summer reading program, “They come and report their progress to us, and tell us that they’ve set additional goals for themselves such as finishing early or reading beyond the requirements. Things like that make my day. Our readers have a lot to be proud of!”

Another big part of the job is story time, “My favorite time of the day, I try to make it age appropriate and have a theme – recently it was three different books about animals.”

Back to back story times, on Mondays and Thursdays, accommodate an ever growing group of participants, keeping her plenty busy. In

addition to stories read aloud, there are songs and fingerplays. Mother Goose story time is geared toward kids up to three years old, sessions are held at 10:15 and 10:55. Preschool story time follows Mother Goose at 11:30. For this group, “Miss Jenna” focuses on kindergarten readiness – things like raising your hand and counting.

From her early childhood days in southern California, Skinner has always been a big fan of the library, “My parents are huge readers.” Both of them are teachers – her father is a college professor and her mother teaches middle school.

For the past dozen years she’s lived in northern California, getting her Bachelor’s degree from San Francisco State and a Master’s in Library Science from San Jose State University. The specialized SJSU program focuses on developing early literacy skills like narration, vocabulary and sound recognition; “It’s all about preparing the kids to read,” said Skinner.

Although she just started at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center in mid-June, she’s already getting to know quite a few of the regular pint-sized patrons. Prior to this position, she was the Youth Services Librarian in Oakley.

A new book club for tweens – fourth through sixth graders – is on the drawing board, and Skinner is hoping to expand story times to include family members. The Lafayette Library and Learning Center has so much to offer toddlers to grown-ups, starting with air conditioning and a food-friendly policy (check out the convenient Book Mark Café next door), even an adult summer reading program with prizes, what’s not to like?

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