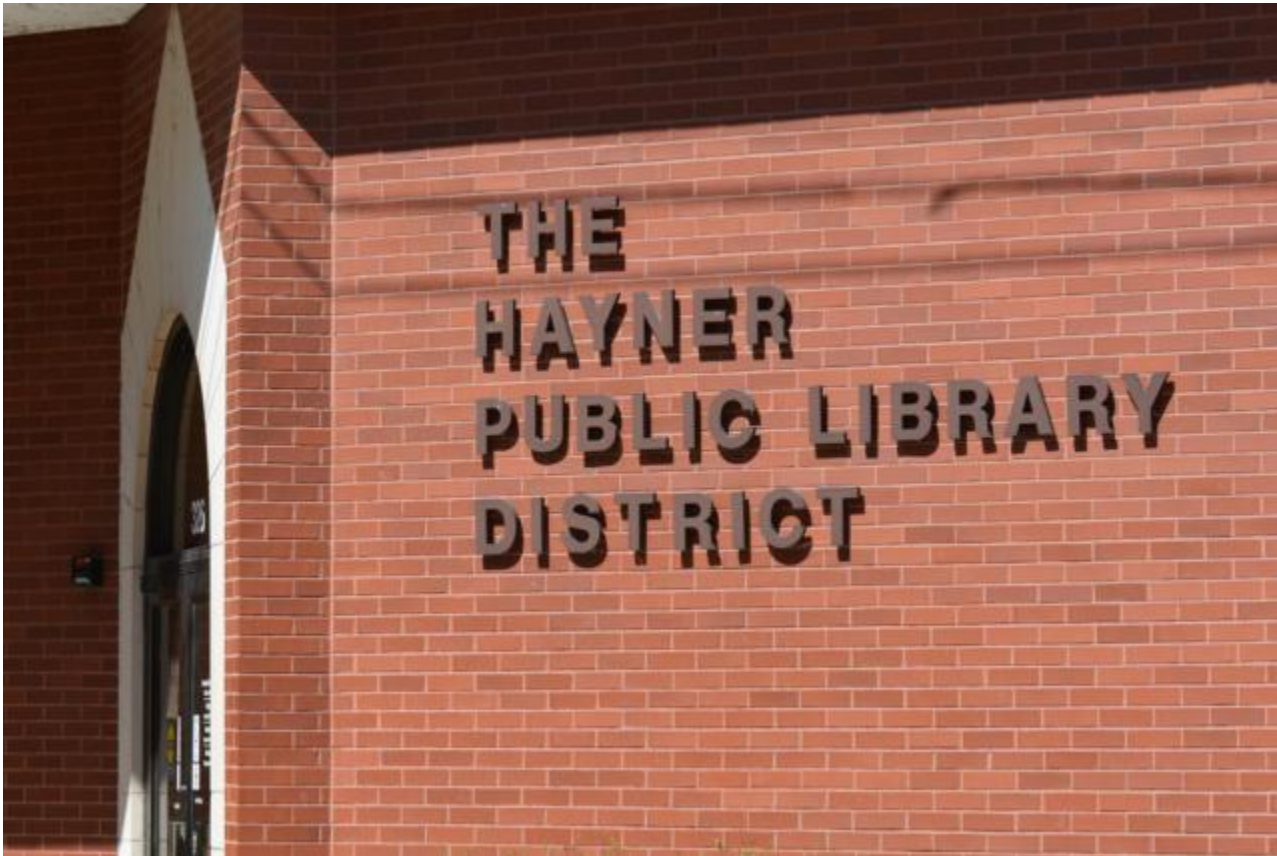


Hayner Library Offers New Incentive Programs for Young Readers

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - As we start 2024, the Hayner Public Library District is sharing information about their programs for kids and teens, all free of charge and meant to encourage literacy and library use.

The library offers many [services, programs and events](#) to patrons, but staff and board members make a special point to reach young people. They have several programs that promote reading at a young age, and they try to engage kids of all ages to get involved with the library and give back to the community.

“Obviously, literacy is a huge part of the library,” Director Mary Cordes said. “We have a couple of different incentives for getting kids to read and for families to read together and for literacy.”

For younger children, the library’s [KidsSpace](#) is a mix of storytimes, events and reading programs. Cordes explained that [Reading Dragons](#) is one of the library’s most popular new programs. For every 30 minutes that a child reads and logs with the library, they receive a card with a “mystical creature” on it. The kids can collect dragons, griffins and unicorns and watch the animals grow from eggs to adults. Cordes described it as a fun trading card game that connects kids to the library.

“It’s a new game that you can play with your friends,” she added. “It’s just an incentive to get kids reading and giving them little incentive prizes while they do that.”

You can get started at Hayner Library’s location at Alton Square Mall. While you’re there, check out Treasures in the Library, a treasure hunt where kids follow clues hidden throughout the library to discover a treasure chest of prizes. The clues change every other week. Cordes said that this game is “really, really popular” and it teaches kids how to navigate the library on their own.

Games like these encourage kids to read and enjoy their time at the library, but another program targets even younger children to promote a lifelong love of reading. [“1,000 Books Before Kindergarten”](#) asks parents to read their children 1,000 books starting at birth up to age 4 before they enter kindergarten. You can register for the program and log your books to receive a prize at every reading milestone.

“It’s just reinforcing to your children how important reading is from a young age,” Cordes explained. “Because if you start, if you become a reader when you’re young, you’ll almost always be a lifelong reader. So it’s really important to get children started early, and it helps their development and it sets them up for success in school.”

Cordes sees many of these lifelong readers in the library’s [TeensSpace](#) at Alton Square Mall. Hayner offers several programs for young adults, but their most popular is the Teen Advisory Board, which meets once a month at 4 p.m. and encourages teenagers to share their needs and how the library could help meet them.

“That just lets our teens tell us, ‘What do you want to do at the library? What do you want to read? What do you want to watch? What do you want to do as programming? What events would you like to see at the library?’” Cordes said. “And then we have our YA Wednesdays, and that’s also at the mall. It’s the same day and it starts at 5 p.m. So you’re already there for the Teen Advisory Board, then we take what you want to do and put it into action.”

Cordes shares a story about several teenagers on the Teen Advisory Board who wanted to learn how to sew and knit. They wanted to make blankets, hats and scarves to donate to community members who need them, but none of the kids knew how to make these items. So, the library decided to help. Hayner is connecting the teens to volunteers who can teach them and guide them through making their first sewn or knitted items.

If you want to volunteer with TeensSpace, join the Teen Advisory Board, or participate in YA Wednesdays, contact Megan at 618-433-2872 or megan.dees@haynerlibrary.org. To stay up-to-date with the library’s programs, Cordes encourages you to sign up for their weekly email newsletter. You can do this and find out more about the Hayner Public Library District at their [official website at HaynerLibrary.org](http://HaynerLibrary.org).