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By ELLY GRIMM

- Leader & Times

Residents looking to get their children involved with an activity now that school is out can look no further than the summer reading program at Liberal Memorial Library.

Sign-ups, which can be done in the library and at the library's website (lmlibrary.org) are still taking place and will go on until June 2, the day the program kicks off. The program has been very popular in recent years, with more than 200 participants each year.

"Everyone knows about the summer slide and how kids actually lose knowledge during the summer," said children's librarian Casandra Norin. "So this is just one way to get them reading

during the summer, and it's a fun way too. But it's not just about reading it's also about having fun and kids get bored during the summer so why not sign them up for something that's absolutely free?"

The program, which will go on for five weeks, has categories for children, teens and adults. The minimum number of hours to read is 10 and those who reach or surpass that get a T-shirt at the end.

There will also be a high readers club for those who read 35 hours or more. Those in that club will get treated to a special party at the end of the program. In the past, this party has been at Adventure Bay Water Park, a mini golf course and a bowling alley.

Both Norin and Phillip Lee, the adult services coordinator at Liberal Memorial Library, said the summer reading program is about more than just reading – it can also be entertaining.

"It gives us a way to actually promote reading in a really fun way as well," Lee said. "We have so much programming going on that it's not just reading, people come out for the programming as well and it's really important to incorporate that so if they come out here for say, lava lamps, they'll be interested enough to go over there and read about lava lamps or about lava in volcanoes instead. If we get one person to do that, we've done our job to actually have them pick up a book or learn more."

It's also not just the reading the library is promoting – there will also be several programs at the library given throughout the program's five week run, including movie presentations, Legos at the Library and a presentation from Dan Dan, the magic man. There will also be storytimes, crafts and music activities. All programming is in conjunction with the science theme of this year's summer reading program.

Summer reading will go until July 5 and the final big party, an ice cream social, will be on Aug. 8, which is also when people will receive their T-shirts.

All residents are encouraged to participate in this year's summer reading program.

“You don’t even need a library card to sign up and it gives them a chance to meet new people and meet and hang out with friends they already know so I really think it’s a good way,” Norin said. “Especially for people who are new to the community or changing schools – you know, if you have a third grader who’s going to go to intermediate school, they’ll get to meet new classmates beforehand. It’s as much social as it is reading and it’s as much fun as it is educational.”

“We want to make sure that summer reading is for everybody – it’s not just for kids, it’s not just for teens, it’s for adults as well and it goes across the spectrum and people really do enjoy picking up books,” added Lee. “Even after it’s over we’re still going to be promoting it and improve it.”

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