

NB Public Library: More than just books

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*Play & Learn Workshops. Art Afternoons.
Device Advice. Books on Tap. Baile Latino.
DIY After Dark.*

These activities may not immediately conjure up images of your local library, but these programs are in fact all part of the regular programming lineup the New Braunfels Public Library and Westside Community Center provide the New Braunfels community.

And the library's programming initiatives extend beyond the walls of the library. At Morning-side Park, for example, you'll find a permanently installed StoryWalk — a children's book broken up page by page and displayed outside, encouraging activity while reading the story — made possible through a partnership between the library and parks and recreation departments, the Friends of the New Braunfels Public Library, the

New Braunfels Parks Foundation, and the New Braunfels Public Library Foundation.

Of course, you'll find the library staples, too — storytimes for babies, toddlers and preschoolers; book groups for adults featuring an assortment of genres; weekly teen programs; a summer reading program for all ages — but it's ultimately due to staff dedication that the library is able to deliver so many different kinds of programming and keep them high-quality.

"Building community is the goal of any great library, and the programming staff at NBPL does an exceptional job of this through our approach to programming," said Youth Services Manager Jenny Rodriguez. "In terms of New Braunfels' youth, that means being responsive to the needs of our families — both recognizing current needs and anticipating needs that our city's rapid growth will demand."

Throughout the years, that has meant ensuring library staff are offering high-interest, developmentally appropriate programming for all ages and adding more sessions of popular programs to accommodate demand.

"This also means researching national trends and initiatives, looking for gaps and opportunities to serve our families in innovative and relevant ways," Rodriguez explained. "Examples of successful youth initiatives include 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, Books for Babies, and most recently, becoming part of the national network of Family Place Libraries. These programs have had a positive impact on



thousands of families in our community.”

1,000 Books for Babies is an initiative designed to encourage reading aloud to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, an activity that builds early literacy skills and sets up reading as a fun, memorable experience. Any parent or caregiver can sign up their child at the library.

When kids enter kindergarten, they’re ready for Curiosity Club at the library. This is a time for kids ages 5-7 to explore different art media and techniques, nature and wild-life, holidays, building and engineering, and special surprise activities. Older kids have Tween Tuesdays, which provide a variety of STEAM-themed activities, or Teen Thursdays, which include Anime & Manga Club, Art Afternoons, Comics Club, and more.

Adults, too, have plenty of program options to choose from. Whether you want to learn Spanish or English, how to play Dungeons & Dragons or how to knit or crochet, or you want to partake in some low stakes crafting or need help with your phone, you can find it at the library or Westside Community Center. And at Westside Community Center, you can take a Zumba class, or a Baile Latino or line dancing class, play pickleball or attend a yoga session — there are wellness options available for everyone.

This commitment to high-quality programming has made the library a destination for families not just in New Braunfels, but in the surrounding area.

“I’m incredibly proud of our programming staff and the quality and diversity of programs we offer,” Rodriguez said. “We’re so excited for the future and expanding our reach as we open the new Westside Branch in the fall.”

Funding for library programming comes from the Friends of the New Braunfels Public Library, a nonprofit organization that raises money throughout the year through book sales in the Friends of the Library Bookstore, a Children’s Book Sale at the beginning of summer reading, and an annual book sale in the fall at the New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center. Programming through the library and Westside Community Center is



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always free and open to the public. Some programs have a limited number of spots available and require registration.

Youth Services programming is on pause during August, but you can check out upcoming fall programs (and register online) at www.nbtexas.org/LibraryEvents.

Keeping it Local

Programming is at its best when it resonates with members of the community, and sometimes that connection starts not through the program itself, but through the resources available to inspire it.

Westside Community Center is no stranger to partnering with the Sophienburg Museum and Archives for annual Hispanic heritage celebrations; in September 2021, the two worked together to celebrate *Diez y Seis de Septiembre*, including a special exhibit featuring local *Diez y Seis* parades and queens from 1900s to 1970s and sourced from local historical archives at the library and the museum.

“Due to collaborations between the library and museum, the wealth of local history that residents have available to them is truly special,” said Jennifer Hernandez, Westside Community Center’s outreach coordinator. “Over the years, there have been many incredible people who have collaborated to create memorable events that will forever be documented and ready for future generations to discover.

“History has been collected by volunteers building relationships with people in the community, knocking on doors to ask families to archive photos, and making endless amounts of phone calls with a great listening ear and heart,” she continued. “As we know, everyone’s story is different. With

a vibrant Hispanic community and rich history in New Braunfels, we’re incredibly grateful to be in a position to advocate for the work that museum staff and volunteers do to update and digitize Hispanic Heritage in the community, and the local history resources available through the library have been an invaluable part of the process of making sure these stories are told.”

The Sophienburg and WCC are already hard at work preparing for this year’s celebration — *Jardín de las Almas / Garden of Souls* — which will be held on Saturday, Sept. 10, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on the grounds of the Sophienburg, located at 401 W. Coll St. The celebration will explore the history of five local cemeteries. The intent of the exhibit is to demonstrate how you can (re)construct someone’s story through photos, records, newspapers, and other documents.

Digital archives of the *Herald-Zeitung* from 1905-2021 are available through the New Braunfels Public Library. Issues through 1976 are available to the public and accessible from anywhere; years 1976-2021 are available to browse in the library. For those especially interested in genealogy, Ancestry, Geni, and Family Search are all available through the library.

“Living in New Braunfels, with our wealth of local resources, allows everyone — people from all cultures and speakers of all languages — to be a part of history, to be present in the moment, to participate, and to even record their own story at our local museum or through events in our community,” said Hernandez.

If you have any questions about the library or library programming, call 830-221-4300. You can also call the Westside Community Center at 830-221-4630.

