

## Copper Queen Library to start preschool science, math program

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Copper Queen Library Manager Jason Macoviak (center) shows Vivienne, 5, and Wesley, 3, some of the interactive tools the library will use in its new preschool STEM program this summer. Copper Queen received about \$2,000 worth of supplies in a grant from the Arizona State Library to help kick start its STEM course for 0 to 5 year olds.

BISBEE — For Bisbee preschoolers, the library is about to become a whole lot more hands-on this summer with a new science, engineering, technology and math program.

The Copper Queen Library will soon offer a preschool STEM course, all thanks to a grant from the Arizona State Library. The program will help facilitate early childhood learning through weekly interactive exercises with family members and other children.

“It’s also a preschool literacy program,” said Alison Williams, assistant program coordinator for the library. “And teaching parents to use books to go further than reading.”

Copper Queen received about \$2,000 worth of supplies Tuesday from the state library during a training session to help prepare library staff for the program, Williams said. The course, called Fun with Math and Science, will incorporate aspects of STEM into literacy development during group classes at the library over the course of six weeks.

Fun with Math and Science will take place once a week and is planned to kick off this summer and will be followed up by another six-week course in the fall.

The program stemmed from an idea by the Scottsdale Public Library, Williams said, and inspired other libraries across the state — like the Copper Queen — to follow suit. Now, with help from the Arizona State Library’s grant, Copper Queen has new children’s books that focus on math and science, buckets of interactive learning tools and nature-themed toys to help kids learn about the environment.

But the course isn’t just for the kids, parents will learn a thing or two about early childhood development during each course.

Jason Macoviak, library manager at Copper Queen, said the program will be interactive for both parents and their children. Throughout the course, parents and guardians will learn how to go beyond reading and help their kids start to think about the world around them.

“It helps parents to be empowered to interact with their children,” Macoviak said. “Asking them (children) ‘why are things that way?’ ... There is a lot of emphasis on the parent in this program.”

Parents and guardians who participate will receive a binder full of tips to help guide STEM learning at home. These tools for parents, Macoviak said, will make sure that preschool kids are always learning, even outside of the classroom — all while getting parents involved with their children’s education.

“That’s the library’s role: to give parents these tools and the confidence that they can do it,” Macoviak said.

At each weekly program, kids and their parents will be able to explore three interactive stations pertaining to the theme of the week, Williams said. Over the course of six weeks, the program will tackle educational themes ranging from the five senses to measurement.

The whole point of the program is to help preschool-aged children be more prepared for kindergarten. Williams hopes the new program will also inspire interest in STEM fields at an earlier age.

For parents like Melissa Holden, the program will help give her kids a head start before they start kindergarten. Holden, mother of 3-year-old Wesley and 5-year-old Vivienne, said she excited to see what the course teaches her kids in the comes weeks.

“If we can plant those seeds to get the kids interested now, then they won’t be as intimidated down the road,” Holden said. “Especially with girls in science and engineering — just to protect that curiosity and let them be excited by it instead of scared.”

The ability to work with their hands, Holden said, will affect on the how well young children retain what they learn through the courses.

“That’s what really makes a lasting impression, working with their hands and seeing how things work,” she said. “It really lets the lessons sit in with them.”

Williams said the classes will be limited to 16 children and their guardians. Registration is scheduled to open in May for the summer session. For more information, contact the Copper Queen Library at (520)-432-4232.

