

News from around the State

Cecil County Public Library continuing to support families with Kids' Academy

Several years ago, in support of the increasing number of homeschooling families in Cecil County, CCPL's children's librarians created Kids' Academy. This program, designed primarily for families with children in non-traditional school settings, provided children opportunities to engage in STEM-based learning activities in support of a home-based curriculum.

Though the pandemic has made it impossible to offer Kids' Academy in person, the need for this program in our community remains, and in some ways is more beneficial than ever, in light of the increase in homeschooling, learning pods, and other non-traditional approaches this school year.

In September, 2020, the children's services team collaborated to shift this program from a hands-on, in-person experience to one that could be provided in a virtual environment and launched Kids' Academy Online.

Each monthly program features a lesson on a topic in STEM, art, history, or literacy accompanied by a hands-on learning experience. Families register in advance and visit the library to pick up a packet of supplies and supporting materials prior to the program. Families then join one of our children's librarians via Zoom to learn about the topic and conduct the hands-on experiments and activities together in the online environment. These programs are highly participatory: attendees are encouraged to talk and ask questions aloud or in the chat and are able to keep their cameras turned on if they choose. A goal of the Kids' Academy program has always



been to provide a space for homeschooling children to meet one another, socialize, and collaborate while learning something new. While this goal can be more difficult in the online environment, the open, participatory nature of the Kids' Academy Online classroom provides the opportunity for the participants to connect and share with one another from home.

Themes from past months include The Moon, Titanic Sink or Float, Dreaming of Van Gogh, and Arctic Adventure. We have seen a great turnout for these programs averaging 25-30 participants at each session and have received positive feedback from attendees and parents. With the success of the program, we are planning to continue offering this online opportunity for homeschooling families in the new year.