

Quarry Park Library promotes early literacy with new kits featuring books, toys in rolling case

BY RYAN RUMBOLT NOVEMBER 28, 2016

Calgary Public Libraries are rolling out a new item to get kids away from the screens and into a book.



Paul McIntyre Royston (left) and Bill Ptacek (right) with Calgary Public Library take one of the new Read and Play kits out for a test drive on Monday November 28, 2016 in Calgary, AB
RYAN RUMBOLT / POSTMEDIA

Thanks to a donation by Imperial and a partnership with the YMCA, the Read and Play kits combine playtime activities with toys and books to promote early literacy during the most critical stages in childhood development.

“(Kids) go crazy over them,” said Paul McIntyre Royston, Calgary Public Library Foundation President. “It’s the perfect combination of play and reading, so they go and they play with all the toys inside ... and you read a bit and then they play again.”

Each of the six themed kits — including Farm Animals, Things That Go and Fun with Food — are in a rolling case that kids can ride on and are filled with books and toys that promote learning in the family home.

There are currently 120 kits available at the Quarry Park Library, but McIntyre Royston said demand is so high that there are rarely more than five kits available at any one time.



Read and Play kits feature toys and books focused on promoting early literacy and physical activity. RYAN RUMBOLT / POSTMEDIA

“No one has ever done anything quite like this,” McIntyre Royston said. “It’s a real innovative step, and our ultimate goal is to get them in every library. They’re big, so they take up a lot of space and we literally haven’t been able to keep them on the shelves.”

The three-year pilot project is based out of the Quarry Park Library and combines the library’s focus on

cognitive literacy and the YMCA’s expertise in physical fitness.

“Kids in our community deserve every opportunity possible to live healthy and active lives,” said Helene Weir, president of YMCA Calgary. “This partnership is helping them achieve that.”

The Read and Play kits were made possible by a \$350,000 donation from Imperial who wanted to give back to the community after moving their offices into Quarry Park in 2014.

“In this day and age when things are quite difficult in Calgary economically, it’s critically important that we combine innovation with collaboration, and this was a perfect opportunity to do that,” said Kim Fox, Imperial external relations manager. “Hopefully it will be something that we can introduce in other communities as well.”

As part of the “Add In” campaign to improve libraries in the city, McIntyre Royston said the donation brings Calgary Public Library Foundation within \$50 million of their \$350 million goal.

“(Imperial) recognize that this is their neighbourhood, and this is the kind of thing that makes it easier to stay invested in the community. We’re adding three new libraries in a few years so it’s been that incredible support for that, and crossing \$300 million was amazing.”