



OCEAN COUNTY LIBRARY

Connecting People ... Building Community...Transforming Lives

101 Washington St., Toms River, NJ 08753-7625

Telephone: 732-349-6200

www.theoceancountylibrary.org

Susan Quinn, Director

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PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Mongelli, 732-349-6200, ext. 5900
tmongelli@theoceancountylibrary.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ocean County Library Federal Grant to Provide Literacy Support for Neurodiverse Children Under Age 5

Toms River – A program that will provide literacy-based services for the neurodiverse community, from birth to age 5, is being launched at the Ocean County Library.

Milestones in Neurodiversity & Literacy to Grow will be initially offered in the Library's Brick, Stafford, and Little Egg Harbor branches through a \$7,900 Library Services and Technology Act 2022 (LSTA 22) grant award, administered by the New Jersey State Library, an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University.

The grant, which runs through August 31, 2023, will allow implementation through partnerships with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Center for Autism Research, the Ocean County Health Department, and Parents Of Autistic Children (POAC).

Each branch will be equipped with iPads containing Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) apps to support professional and caregiver accessibility to costly adaptive technology.

Training and education will aim to enhance capacity and skills, improve practices and behaviors, teach age-appropriate child development skills, and mark literacy-related milestones.

The program was developed for the library system by Youth Services Librarian Kate Sanchez and Adult Services Librarian Leslie Karvan, of OCL's Little Egg Harbor Branch.

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“The Library aims to encourage lifelong learning through family literacy,” said Karvan. “This grant will help us continue to provide resources to enhance quality of life in our Ocean County communities.”

“We are grateful for the generous support of the New Jersey State Library,” added Sanchez. “This grant will help the library continue to provide equitable technology, programming, and resources to the Ocean County community.”

“Active engagement in our communities allows us to pinpoint needs that the Library can address,” said Ocean County Library Director Susan Quinn. “This program exemplifies the diligence and sensitivity of the librarians and staffers in our 21 branches and reading centers.”

Library Commission Chair, Ruthanne Scaturro, had this to say, “I am very proud of our library staff members who work to respond to the needs of our various communities in Ocean County, especially for our children.”

“New Jersey’s public libraries have proposed a number of creative ways to address literacy needs in local communities. I’m excited to see the ways libraries can provide unique literacy rich activities and environments for residents,” said Jen Nelson, New Jersey State Librarian.

LSTA 22 funds are awarded to library projects that address literacy needs including, but not limited to, early literacy, family literacy, adult literacy, digital literacy, and financial and English language learning activities. They are made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to address literacy needs and support literacy projects throughout New Jersey.

For more information about the grant, and about *the Milestones in Neurodiversity & Literacy to Grow* program, call Ocean County Library, (732) 349-6200.

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