



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Pay A Visit To Your Local Library

JAMES L. SEWARD September 9, 2010

As children head back to school, there is no shortage of interests competing for their time. New friends, homework, sports and other extracurricular activities all have their place and each helps play a part in developing a well-rounded, successful child. One pursuit that should also be added to the list is a trip to the local library.

September is *Library Card Sign-up Month*, a time to make sure that all children have the smartest card of all – a library card. Observed since 1987, *Library Card Sign-up Month* is a time when the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the country remind parents that a library card is the most important school supply of all.

Library cards are generally free to those living in the library's service area. Some libraries may require some form of identification, proof of residency or the signature of a guardian. In most cases, borrowing privileges are granted on the spot.

As soon as you set foot inside a library there is a feeling that anything is possible. Our local libraries provide genuine connections to the past, and in many cases they are among the oldest buildings in our communities. They also offer a gateway to the future, providing users young and old with essential learning tools.

According to the American Library Association, libraries play an important role in the education and development of children. Studies show that children who are read to in the home and who use the library perform better in school and are more likely to continue to use the library as a source of lifetime learning.

In these tough economic times libraries have taken on added significance. Along with traditional book lending and research opportunities, our libraries also help jobs seekers who come to use the internet to search for employment or refresh their resumes. Others stop by to research their family trees or simply enjoy some quiet time with a good book.

Libraries also offer magazines, audio and videotapes, computer software and other multimedia materials. Libraries offer a wide range of other items on loan to children and their families, including toys, games and puzzles. Most can be borrowed for home use simply by showing a library card. And librarians are on hand to help recommend materials suitable for various ages and interests.

In our rural areas, libraries truly are community centers, serving as the hubs for countless activities. Each has developed its own special programs for families and children that entertain and educate, helping foster lifelong readers. In short, a lot is happening at your local library, and the best part is that it is all free with a library card.

The ALA lists 52 ways to use your library card; one for each week of the year. Here are a few:

- Get to know your librarian, the ultimate search engine at your library;
- Participate in a community forum;
- Get new ideas for redecorating your home;
- Get a list of community organizations;
- Attend a lecture or workshop;

- Hear a local author read his/her latest novel;
- Join a book discussion group;
- Attend preschool story hour with your child;
- Get homework help;
- Research the purchase of a new car;
- Learn about the history of your city or town;
- Use the library's resources to start a small business;
- See a new art exhibit;
- Take a computer class;
- Enjoy a concert;
- Read a newspaper from another country;
- Check out a special collection of rare books;
- Connect with other people in your community.

As you can see, the list is almost endless and encompasses all types of interests. If you don't have a library card, stop by your local library during the month of September and pick one up, and if you already have a card, pull it out and put it to use.

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