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The Liberal Memorial Library is now a Family Place Library.

The Library will be offering a five-week program that involves toddlers and their parents and caregivers; featuring local professionals who serve as resources for parents; emphasizing the role of parents as the first teachers of their children; facilitating early intervention; and teaching strategies for healthy child development and early literacy.

The five-week workshop will be held twice this year, once in April and again in the fall. The first workshop begins on April 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the Library, running every Thursday through May 9.

The program is open and free to the public, but space is limited and registration is required.

Casandra Norin, who will oversee the workshops, believes the resources provided by the program will benefit the community.

“The Family Place Library will give parents and caregivers an additional place for children, between the ages of zero and five, to play, read and socialize with other children,” said Norin, who is the Library’s new children’s librarian. “Parents can interact with their kids through play, get answers to their parenting questions and meet other parents.”

Norin added that the workshop is unique in that it focuses on a “Parenting through Play” approach.

“A parent is a child’s first and most important teacher, and the program is different from other parenting workshops in that parents and children spend the hour together, playing, asking questions and meeting other parents,” Norin said. “ 'Parenting through play' describes the program well because the guest professionals from outside of the library will interact with parents as they are playing with their children, answering questions and giving support.”

According to Paulina Poplawska, assistant director of Liberal Memorial Library, the library was approached by Smart Start (which is now Russell Development Center in Garden City) to take part in the program.

“(Smart Start) approached (Library Director Jill Pannkuk) and the Library board back in February of 2012,” Poplawska said. “The library board voted to take part in the program that June. At that time, the closest Family Place Libraries were in Colorado and Oklahoma with Liberal, Ulysses, and Garden City in southwest Kansas coming on board in 2012.”

The Library received a grant to join the program and purchased new parenting books which were added to the Library’s existing collection. It also acquired manipulative toys to be used in the children’s area and in the "Parenting through Play" workshops during the five-week program.

Norin stressed that even after the five-week parent/child workshop is finished, the Library will continue to be a center for early childhood information, parent education, emergent literacy, socialization and family support.

“The children’s area is going to be a welcoming place for parents and their small children to read, play and find the information that they need,” she said.

For more information about Family Place Library and the workshops, come down to the Library or call (620) 626-0180.

Library Press Release