

Library summer reading programs turned pages for prizes

By OLIVIA ROSE
Pilot writer

The 2023 summer reading programs at the Petersburg Public Library ended in July after six weeks of participants flipping pages, learning instruments, and math-ing their way through an escape room. Across three programs, 270 people of all ages took part in this story, with 65 completing their program cover to cover.

Kari Peterson, Program Coordinator for the Petersburg Public Library, said "It went really well, this summer."

Back in spring, the library had this year's prizes out on display. Raffle prizes were stacked in a large case and two paddle boards hung suspended in the center, with two child-sized boards marked grand prize positioned nearby. "We bring the whole elementary school through the library, and we explain the summer reading program," said Peterson. "They get all jazzed when they see the prizes."

Three summer programs welcomed participants of all ages to turn pages to earn prizes. The three programs were Bookworms (for ages 0 to 3), Summer STREAM (participants aged 3 to 13), and Sea of Possibilities (aged 13 and over).

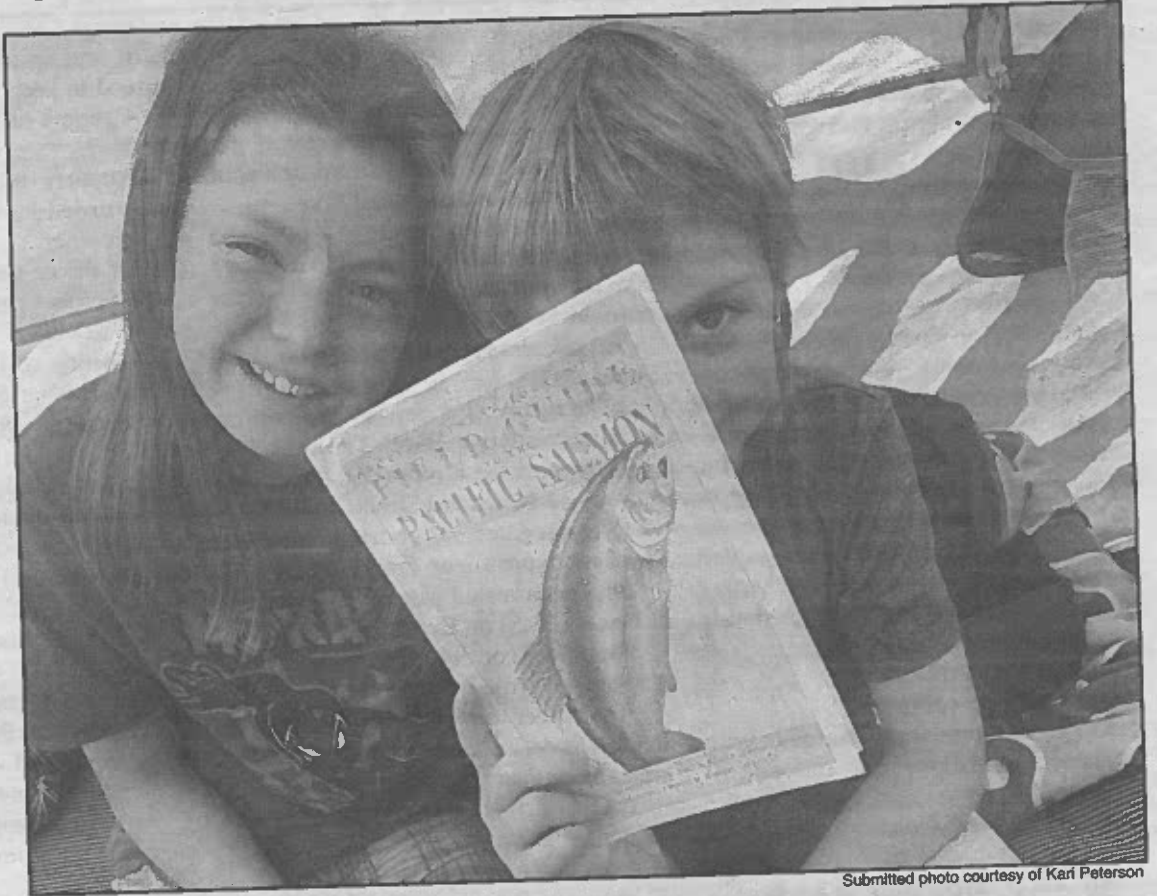
Bookworms participants who read five books to their child for six weeks could earn a gift card to Sing Lee Alley Books upon completion and entry toward the grand prize drawing for a Caregiver Massage from Nancy Zaic. Nine out of 22 registrants completed the program, which was sponsored by Karen Hofstad.

Sea of Possibilities saw 20 teens and 61 adults register and begin the program, which entailed reading and writing reviews about four chapter books within two months. 16 teens and adults completed the program and each received a raffle ticket to enter towards either two paddle boards or \$250 cash grand prize. Sea of Possibilities was sponsored by the Friends of Petersburg Libraries.

Summer STREAM was this year's largest, being the "bulk of the program," which Peterson found exciting.

"We had twice as many complete the [STREAM] program as we did last year, which was a big deal for me ... We had 167 register and participate on some level, and of that, 40 of them actually completed all 12 badges, or more."

In the STREAM program, kids earned badges each week for reading, attending library programs, and completing ac-



Submitted photo courtesy of Kari Peterson

Bay and Odin Odegaard showing off their Summer STREAM science reading while camping.

tivities that included a focus like art or engineering — or even checking out a guitar to learn.

As an incentive to keep kids reading beyond the 12 badge goal for the program, each badge held value for one raffle ticket — all badges but one: the math escape room, which was worth four tickets.

"I really, really enjoyed this year's [escape room]," said Peterson. She credits Chris Weiss for designing the activity, which guided kids through photos of local wilderness with the application of math and scientific data collection, according to Peterson. To get out of the escape room and earn the treasured tickets, participants "had to do the math" to obtain the code, which was entered at the end to get the badge from the game.

Last year, only one participant managed to achieve the math escape room badge; this year, 29 completed it — and 116 tickets were handed out as a result.

At the end of all six weeks, 40 kids in the STREAM program earned at least 12 badges

each and were rewarded with entry in the grand prize drawing for a paddle board, as well as a Completion Card that included free treats at five different businesses, which Peterson says was "very motivating this year." 22 raffle prizes of toys and games were given out, as well as two gift certificates to Papa Bear's Pizza.

Summer STREAM was funded by donations from local businesses, organizations, and individuals.

"This program is so highly tailored to Petersburg and to our specific library, and I feel like the reason we're able to do it is because of the community's support," Peterson said. "It's all funded by the local community ... And that's, I mean, that's huge. We couldn't do it without that."

The library is now selling hoodies featuring art by Doris Olsen that is inspired by the 'Giant Squid' artwork she did in the children's room of the library 10 years ago. "We wanted to use a piece of art that was recognizable as the library," said Peterson. "That one really stands out ... just because we all look at it all day long."

Proceeds from the \$45

hoodies support all library programming like the summer reading programs and the after school programs, according to Peterson and a note from Librarian Tara Alcock. Alcock says "they've been a big hit so far" and even more of the swag will be in stock soon.

Now that summer reading competitions and grand prizes have come to a close, Petersburg can look forward to future programming at the public library.

"We've got lots of art classes coming up here," like Pia Riley's watercolor workshop and making enamel earrings in Ashley Lor's class. Peterson says kids can count on the return of robotics, Stories in Motion and "we'll start some after school programming probably in October," as well as another reading challenge likely to happen in February 2024.

In a message to the Pilot, Alcock said that Peterson "really is the mastermind behind the majority of our programs and does an amazing job of it. She has a special talent for creating fun, engaging and educational programs for kids."

You can see from the high levels of participation how much they enjoy it."



Photo courtesy of Kari Peterson

Library sweatshirt featuring artwork by Doris Olsen.

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