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Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 Megan Neeley, 5, of West Bloomfield reads to Roxy the dog April 8 at the West Bloomfield Township Public Library. The Read to a Dog event allowed students in kindergarten through fifth-grade to read to certified therapy dog.

Libraries, parks programs and malls host hot summer activities for kids

By Robin Ruehlen
 C & G Staff Writer

School is out for the summer, but trips to summer day camp, local libraries, parks and even the mall for great kids' entertainment are in.

April Heier, recreation coordinator for the Clinton Township Parks and Recreation Department, said the program's third annual Safety Town Program at Clintondale Middle School is a big hit with both parents and children.

"We're super excited this year, because we just redid our whole Safety Town and updated all the roads," Heier said.

Safety Town, which runs Monday through Thursday, is designed as a mini-Clinton Township, complete with houses and roads that children ride through on mini-bikes and little cars. The program is designed to help kids learn about water safety, fire safety, seatbelt safety, street awareness, bike safety and stranger safety through songs and hands-on activities, complete with a "graduation" at the end of the two-week course. A souvenir T-shirt is included and is given out the first day of class.

"On graduation day, every kid gets a bike helmet, and the Clinton Township police come in and teach our staff how to fit the helmets properly," Heier said.

"It's definitely our goal to get kids out of the house and learning new skills while they're on summer break."

Session two begins July 6 and runs 8:30-11 a.m. for ages 4-5, and from noon- 2 p.m. for ages 5-6. Session three begins July 20. The fee is \$44 for residents, and \$57 for non-residents.

In Roseville, administrative program coordinator Bobbie Wilson said Roseville's Summer Playgrounds program is popular for residents with children or those who

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care for children.

“We think it’s important that kids have more positive options than sitting home and playing video games,” Wilson said.

“We try to incorporate new skills and help them learn a new craft — not only to give them more positive activities, but to teach them lifelong skills.”

The Summer Playgrounds Program runs from 9 to 11:45 a.m. and 12:30-3 p.m. every Monday through Thursday from June 15 to July 30 at Huron Park and Veterans Memorial Park. It includes games, arts and crafts, field trips and special events for children ages 6-12. The fee is \$75 per child. Field trips and swimming are offered at an additional expense.

“It’s another option for stay-at-home moms and dads, or event grandparents who live in Roseville and watch their grandkids during the day. It gets them out of the house and involved.”

At the Bloomfield Township Public Library, 1099 Lone Pine in Bloomfield Hills, families of all ages can participate in drop-in programs such as Family Storytime, which runs 11 a.m.-noon on Wednesdays, July 8 and 22 and Aug. 5. Or, try Wednesday “Crafternoons,” where kids ages 8-14 can participate in art projects from 4:30-5:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. On July 16, experts from Marshall Music will host a Musical Kaleidoscope Instrument Petting Zoo 4:30-6:30 p.m. for ages 4 and older to try out instruments and make an instrument to take home.

At Eastland Center mall, 18000 Vernier Road in Harper Woods, a weekly drop-in program for kids starts July 9 and runs through Aug. 13, every Thursday at 11 a.m. in the Grand Court.

Communications Director Pam Lightbody said the program has “all sorts of summertime fun.”

“We have magicians, puppet shows and lots of other performers for kids, and we get a great deal of attendance. A lot of day cares in the area come in for it, and stay-at-home parents, too,” she said.

Eastland Center, which boasts the largest indoor play area of any mall in the U.S., also hosts birthday parties where families can rent the mall’s auditorium and play area for kids 12 and younger. The first two hours cost \$60, and it’s \$35 for each additional hour.

Macomb Mall, at Gratiot and Masonic in Roseville, also offers its free annual Summer Kids Series, which kicks off June 24 at 11 a.m. and runs every Wednesday through Aug. 26.

For more information on the programs above and more, contact your local library or parks and recreation department, or malls in your area.

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