



Child's Play

Newsletter of the USA Toy Library Association

Spring 2022



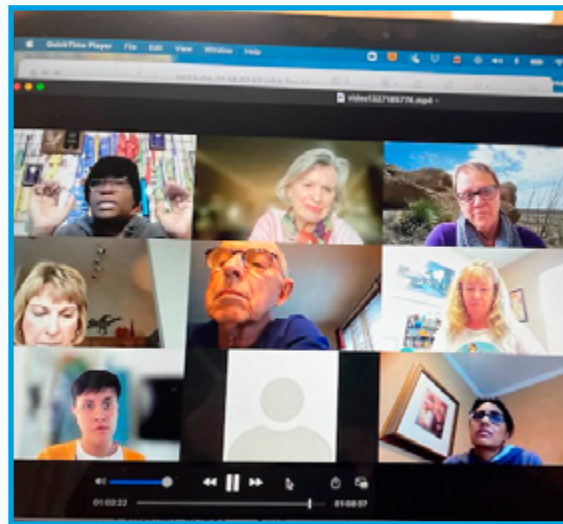
USATLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play

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Members Zoom 'Quality Conversation' on Toy Library Issues

At the USATLA membership meeting in December 2021 it was suggested we try Zooming so that members could meet virtually and discuss issues of concern. So...on January 21, 2022, we launched the first “Quality Conversation,” and 12 members signed on and shared. The topic, “How to gain more visibility in the community.”



“The suggestion to bring members together to talk about issues of concern was a great one,” says Marty Stone, USATLA President. “The topic, how to become better known in the community, prompted all kinds of good suggestions.”

Some of the ideas discussed in the hour included:

- Get in front of related organizations such as Kindergarten and Baby Clubs,
- Attend preview nights at schools, including community colleges to meet new parents,
- Hand out information (flyers, bookmarks, anything else with contact information) at hospitals, doctors and dentist’s offices, shopping centers, service organizations like Rotary International, historical societies

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USA Toy Library Association

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Articles, suggestions and letters are welcome. *Child's Play* newsletter is designed by Anthony Iacuzzi Associates.

Contagious Enthusiasm: The Toy Lending Library of South Dakota Makes Families and Children Happy by Doing What Toy Libraries Do Best

Anelis Coscioni was researching unmet needs in her community and learned that many families in the downtown area of Sioux Falls, S.D., didn't have toys to play with and learn from.

"Of course, when you learn about something that's needed, you need to do something!" she says with characteristic enthusiasm. Seven years ago with strong support from the Soroptimist International Club of Sioux Falls and her family, Anelis co-founded the Toy Lending Library of South Dakota (TLL).

Anelis, a former veterinarian from Brazil and recently elected member of the USATLA Board, says she is learning about the importance of play, toys and managing a toy library by doing it. She lives in Sioux Falls with her husband, Jorge Luna, daughter, Anita, two very old beagles and three chickens. #



Volunteer Executive Director Anelis Coscioni garnered the help of the Soroptimist International Club of Sioux Falls to launch the Toy Lending Library of South Dakota. The Club is a branch of the global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.



Anelis' daughter Anita holds one of the family's several chickens. Her husband Jorge Luna offers the snowy selfie on the right.



Anelis writes that the following tenets guide the development of the TLL:

A Mission

The TLL mission is straightforward: To create opportunities for children zero to five years old to enhance their learning development through play.

Collaboration

To fulfill its mission, the TLL creates beautiful toy boxes that are color-coded by age group and available for check-out, free of charge, from 13 locations. Aside from the main office, toy lending locations are determined through partnerships with other libraries. For each partnered location, the TLL provides the toy boxes ready for check-out and cleans/sanitizes/repairs all the toy boxes once they are returned.

Deliveries

The TLL partners with another nonprofit organization that works with adults with disabilities. That organization provides many volunteers to deliver clean toy boxes to the local library branches and at the same time retrieve the dirty ones and deliver them back to the TLL main office.

Toy Boxes Require Maintenance and Care

TLL toy boxes contain one or more toys, a book and informational materials, including a survey for caregivers. Anelis learned from the Siouxland libraries that if a child plays and reads or is read to, it's a more complete learning experience. She adds, "It's even more fun, right?"

Each toy box is marked with a large, colorful label that pictures all the toys included in the box. Each toy piece is marked with "TLL" (Toy Lending Library) to provide additional help in identifying which toys and parts need to be returned. #



Example: Box E165 for children ages 2+ years



Example: Toy box label F243 for children ages 3+ years

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Once returned to the TLL main office, each box is inspected three times. (1) during processing where toy(s), boxes and books are checked for integrity and missing pieces, (2) during cleaning, and (3) before closing to make sure everything is in order. Once the boxes are clean and dry, informational material and a detailed survey are added to the box with the toys. The last step consists of closing the boxes with zip ties. #

Volunteers in Sioux Falls Make the Difference

The Toy Lending Library of South Dakota (TLL) wouldn't be where it is today without all the volunteers who spend so many hours doing all the activities necessary to have beautiful toy boxes available for checkout.

By the end of December 2021, a total of 12,270 toy boxes had been checked out and renewed over the seven years of the TLL's existence. In 2021 alone, the TLL broke a record number of 3,579 toy boxes checked out and renewed, which also includes a record number of toy boxes cleaned and sanitized.

"Our volunteers are the heart of the TLL organization," says Executive Director Anelis Coscioni, herself a volunteer. An active Board of Directors and two amazing TLL Ambassadors also play important volunteer roles.

"They are awesome! They are fun. They are kind. They care, and together we celebrate every little accomplishment. We all work to give opportunities for children to learn through play."



Toy boxes air drying

Reaching Out

The TLL vision for the next 20 years is to collaborate with 100 libraries/organizations in South Dakota. The latest collaborations include two small towns in South Dakota with fewer resources than Sioux Falls and larger cities.

"It's great that we can provide opportunities for those children to play and learn. Also, we provide these families with informational materials, such as the CDC Milestone Moments books," says Anelis. (Books are free to order at: <https://www.cdc.gov/Milestones>)

Recalls

The TLL includes new and gently-used toys and books in its collection. Every week a volunteer checks for toy recalls listed in the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC.gov) website. The TLL eliminates from its collection any toys that have been recalled by the CPSC. #

Toys Boxes for Children with Disabilities

Another recent development is loaning toy boxes to children with disabilities. TLL Board Member Amanda Larson and special needs teacher, Jill Dykstra, created a system to prepare toy boxes for children with disabilities.

"A collaboration with Dr. Kathleen B. Cook from Augustana University (Sioux Falls, S.D.) provides strong support in identifying which toys offer the best learning opportunities for the children and which books are appropriate to pair with the toys," says Anelis. "Dr. Kathleen has also prepared written instructions for caregivers to help them introduce toys to the children and choose supportive play activities."

"We are very excited to provide these resources for families with children with disabilities!" #

SPRING MEMBER FOCUS

One step further... Braille!

“But labels with pictures and written words would not include everyone, right?” says Anelis. “The next step we are working on is to include descriptive words in Braille on the labels.” #

In Summary

“We are always looking for ways to improve what we are doing and to create new collaborations,” says Anelis.

“Our volunteers are the heart of a beautiful giving community that supports the project with toys, books and resources. It’s amazing to see all the volunteers working hard to get the boxes ready and out of the door. It’s beautiful to see the children in awe when they come to the office and choose a toy box.

“It’s a great feeling when we read the surveys and learn how much the children learned while they had fun.”

“This is what we do here, and we have fun while doing it,” says Anelis. “Do you have questions? Would you like to join us? Let us know! Would love to visit with you.” #



A happy parent, Alicia V., writes about her daughter’s experience with the TLL: “She learned about cooking and different vegetables.... It’s such a great program! Kids get sick of toys so fast. With this we get a new toy every week!”



Volunteer and TLL ambassador Cindy proudly shows the first toy box created for children with disabilities, ready for check-out

Anita Luna Coscioni Named Sioux Empire Volunteer of the Month

The Helpline Center of Sioux Falls congratulates Anita Luna Coscioni on being named the Sioux Empire February 2022 Volunteer of the Month, an area-wide award program sponsored by Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of S.D.



Anita has been a part of the Toy Lending Library of South Dakota her entire life -- since the organization’s conception seven years ago.

As a baby, Anita attended meetings with her mother, Anelis, who was creating the mission for the organization and forming its first collaborations. More recently, Anita volunteers by helping prepare the stations and cleaning and sanitizing the toys that have been returned; helping

prepare the toy boxes for checkout; and training other volunteers and playing with their little ones while they volunteer.

During school breaks, Anita spends mornings at the Toy Lending Library, volunteering for at least an hour and playing and having fun the rest of the morning. She is incredibly kind and patient to volunteers when teaching them different activities. She loves to get others excited about the Toy Lending Library mission, and she advocates for children learning through play. She works side by side with adults, demonstrating the same caring and responsible attitude.

The volunteers at Toy Lending Library agree that Anita deserves to be applauded and recognized for her hard work and her caring, kind, loving and responsible attitude.

The Helpline Center was pleased to present Anita with a framed certificate and a letter of appreciation from Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken. #



This is one example of a toy box created for children with disabilities



Box E159S for children with disabilities 2+ years – front, main label

SPRING MEMBER FOCUS

The Toy Lending Library of South Dakota includes a survey (often modified as needed) in every cleaned toy box to better ascertain the needs and interests of the families and children who borrow. Below is an example:

Hello! Do you know that by answering the survey you will be helping the Toy Lending Library of South Dakota (TLL) to improve and/or expand our services? Please take a few minutes and let us know about your experience. Thank you!!!



Survey

Date: _____ Box Identification (number) _____
 Name: _____
 Email(optional) _____
 Phone number (optional) _____
 Can we please share your initials and suggestions on social media? () Yes () No

1. How satisfied was your child with this toy?
- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|---------|---|----------------|
| | a. Very Dissatisfied | | Neutral | | Very Satisfied |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

2. If you are not very satisfied, what can we do to improve your satisfaction?

3. Why do you borrow toy boxes?
- a. Because you know that children learn through play ()
 - b. Because you don't want to have lots of toys in your house ()
 - c. Because you care about the earth and would like to have less toys going to the trash ()
 - d. Because you want to teach about responsibility: borrowing, playing and returning ()
 - e. Because you wanted to try a toy before buying ()
 - f. Because you don't have toys for your child/children to play ()
 - g. Other reason: _____

4. Do you play **more** with your child/children now that you have boxes of toys available to check out?
 5. () Yes () No
6. Once you started using our boxes of toys, did you buy less toys? () Yes () No
7. How many children played with this box? _____
8. How did you find out about the Toy Lending Library? _____
9. Do you care for a child/children with special needs? () Yes () No
10. Do you think there is a need for a toy library for kids with special needs? () Yes () No
 Please explain: _____
11. Did the child/children learn something new after playing with this box? () Yes () No
 If yes, can you please explain: _____

12. We welcome any suggestions, such as toys to buy, ways to make our toy boxes more accessible to everyone...

13. Would you like to help us in other ways?
1. Volunteer with us,
 2. Share your experience on our Instagram and Facebook @toylendinglibrarysiouxfalls
 3. Donate your gently used toys and/or books to the TLL,
 4. Give the Gift of Play: a \$50 donation sponsors a box of toys for one year and your name of the name of a loved one can be on the side of the box,
 5. Make a donation- ToyLendingLibrarySD.org

Make an appointment and come visit us
 401 South Spring Ave, Sioux Falls, SD 57104 **(605) 215-0575**

Toy Lending Library of South Dakota is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and our mission is to create opportunities for children zero to five years old to enhance their learning development through **PLAY**.



Thank You! ¡Muchas Gracias!

Continue on the other side →

Free Play Answers Bullying [Story excerpted from Let Grow Play Club.]

The club is the brainchild of Let Grow co-founder Dr. Peter Gray, the eminent psychologist who has spent his life studying the crucial role of unstructured, mixed-age “free play” in developing children’s creativity, confidence and ability to thrive.

If bullies are unhappy, awkward, or don’t have friends, maybe the key isn’t to shame or blame. It’s something a lot more fun.

To fight bullying successfully, you first have to understand where it’s coming from, writes Kevin Stinehart in eSchoolNews. Stinehart is a fourth grade teacher at a Title 1 (high poverty) elementary school in South Carolina — and the district’s 2020 Teacher of the Year.

“Usually,” he says, “someone is making trouble because they’re frustrated, don’t have many friends, have issues with emotional regulation, and/or feel they have no control over their life.” What could possibly counter all those depressing forces?

Free Play.

That’s not some hippy-dippy hope. That’s a cause-and-effect Stinehart has witnessed firsthand. He writes: “In the years since my school began incorporating more and more unstructured free play into our school day (before school by opening up our playground, during school by adding an additional recess, and after school by adding a Play Club), our students are happier, kinder, have fewer behavior problems, have made more friends, feel more in control of their day and their life in general, and in some cases have dramatically changed course from bullying behaviors and frequent office referrals to no bullying behaviors and no office referrals.”

“It’s hard to believe something so simple — no worksheets, no classroom exercises — could have such a profound social-emotional impact, but Stinehart gives a compelling example of one troubled boy he hoped to help:

One boy, three visits to the principal’s office in one week

“A few years ago I had a student who walked around with a chip on his shoulder. He never smiled, never

laughed, and always seemed angry. He was cruel to other kids, had frequent behavior issues in class, and in the course of one week had three office referrals from three different teachers for his extreme behaviors. Other kids would label him a bully, but where they saw a bully, we as teachers saw a hurting and lonely child in need of friends. He was the kind of student who was always disciplined by losing recess time, so I eventually added it up and realized he was getting only about 30 minutes of playtime in an entire week on average.

“Realizing his lack of play and knowing play’s immense benefits, I arranged a conference with his parent and asked if I could have him join my Play Club — a one-hour afterschool club dedicated to unstructured free play. His parent agreed to let him join, and before I knew it, his first day at Play Club had arrived.

Would this bully-troubled kid ruin everyone else’s play time?

“I was a little nervous that his behavior issues would continue, and he would wreak havoc on my other Play Club students, but I knew play could help him, so I was committed to the process. For the first half hour of Play Club he just walked around by himself. Eventually a student kicked a ball to him and he kicked it back. After a few more kicks, he eventually started running around and playing with the other kids. By the end of that first day of Play Club he was smiling, laughing, and playing in a healthy way—and with other kids! It was shocking to see the transformation in him after just one hour of complete unstructured free play. The teacher supervising Play Club

with me had tears in her eyes at the dramatic change she was witnessing.”

What a fantastic day. But what happened next was even better: The student started having happier, healthier relationships with the other kids as well as the adults. And, Stinehart says, “He never received another office referral again.”

By “again” Stinehart adds, he doesn’t mean the rest of that year. He means the rest of his years at the school.

The anti-bullying effort that is actually fun: Play Club

Obviously, not every story is going to be that dramatic. But Let Grow believes so much in the power of mixed-age, device-free, “loose parts” free play — play that is supervised by an adult who doesn’t organize the games or solve the spats — that we offer all the materials you need to start one, free. (We’re a nonprofit, after all.)

Our Let Grow Play Club implementation guide has instructions for the school, a letter to send home to parents explaining the benefits of play, a little pledge for them to sign and one for the kids to sign, too, saying that they know they cannot deliberately hurt anyone,

or leave the premises without telling whoever’s in charge. Plus we include a link to Let Grow Co-Founder Peter Gray’s TED talk on what happens when kids don’t get enough play.

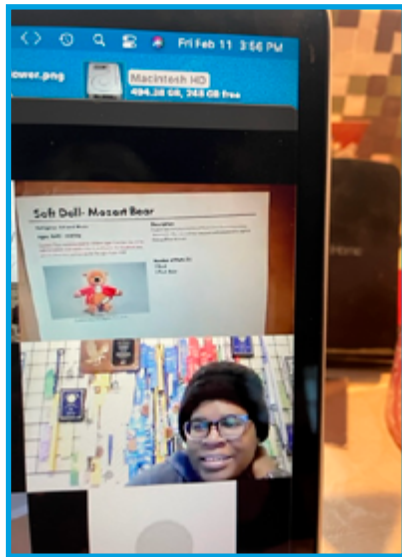
Schools have started Let Grow Play Clubs in the morning before school, and also in the afternoon. Some are supervised by teachers, others by volunteers. Some last an hour, some last longer. One school is studying whether English Language Learners who get more free play learn English faster than those in organized activities. #



Members' Conversations Turn Quality in 2022 - via Zoom

(Continued from page 2)

- Watch for and attend children's festivals
- Accept speaking engagements from or participate at the committee level with local groups, such as service organizations, grandparent groups, senior centers, police departments.
- Consider busing toys to distant locations where patrons cannot travel, such as homeless sites and detention centers.
- Think about free publicity on TV and radio with PSA's, social media



Another excellent resource mentioned which can help with preparing publicity materials cost-effectively is Too Small to Fail Early Childhood initiative of the Clinton Foundation, which surrounds families with early language and learning opportunities, and supports parents and caregivers with resources to talk, read and sing with young children from birth to help prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

The Zoomers asked to meet more frequently than every quarter so we changed the name from Quarterly Conversations to Quality Conversations and will hold the second member Zoom -on March 11 at 2pm Central.

Watch for two email notices to join in! The focus will be the "Handling inventory most effectively." There will also be a show-n-tell! #

Hot on the Trail to Discovering New Toy Libraries

The USATLA is sniffing out toy libraries within the USA public library system that may be lurking in the shadows. Board member Sue Kirschner started this hunt by providing contact information for the heads of state library programs around the country.

USATLA is gathering good information and finding, sometimes hidden in crannies, toy libraries in children's departments. Some programs may be loaning puzzles and puppets, others may be sharing an inventory of more than 1,000 toys. All of them, no matter how large or small, need to be included in the Directory of Toy Libraries on the home page at usatla.org.

If you have information about a toy library that is not recognized in the USATLA Directory, please email Judith Iacuzzi, executive director, at usatla.org@gmail.com with your welcome information!

We hope to double the listing of toy libraries - from 400 to 800 - on this expedition! #



Award-winning Library Puts Toy Lending on Display

The Northbrook Public Library, Northbrook, Ill., winner of the Jane Donelson Player of the Year Award in 2021, invited USATLA to fill two prominent display cases with information about toy

libraries. With the visibility, inquiries about the program at the library increased, according to library staffers. One patron suggested the library carry early childhood equipment so that grandparents could borrow high-chairs or port-a-cribs when grandchildren arrive. "It would save the expenditure and storage challenge that occurs with equipment that is used infrequently," said a patron. The library is considering! #



Member Give & Take

Question:

How do you handle your inventory from display to distribution?

Join the conversation with other members on Friday, March 11, 2022. Watch for the notice in your email early in March. Zoom in!

Log into the *Community Forum* at usatla.org to join in a conversation about this issue. #



USATLA Publications & Resources

The following publications are available for purchase [HERE](#)

Child's Play Newsletter

A newsletter full of information about toy libraries and related topics.

USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual

Everything you need to know about setting up and operating a toy library.

Read It! Play It! by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim

An illustrated, 112-page book of fun activities that build literacy through reading and playing.

Read It! Play It! With Babies and Toddlers by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim

An illustrated, 103-page book that builds literacy with babies and toddlers.

Now in English and Spanish. Please specify

Hey Kids! Out the Door, Let's Explore by Rhoda Redleaf

This 245-page masterwork includes twenty-seven nature, community and concept walks.

Learn and Play the Green Way by Rhoda Redleaf

This 220-page book is grouped into six age-related sections that range from infants to schoolagers.

When Play Isn't Easy: Helping Children enter and Sustain Play

by Sandra Heidemann and Deborah Hewitt

This 87-page book helps children enter and sustain play.

The Power of Play

A discussion about early childhood education with Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, The Epicenter Inc.

Guidance from the CDC on cleaning and disinfecting toys

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, here are recommendations from the Center for Disease Control about cleaning and disinfecting toys. The CDC is a trusted source!

How to Clean and Disinfect Toys

- Clean off visible dirt with soap and water.
- Spray the toys with disinfectant and allow the disinfectant to remain in contact with the toy for one minute and then wipe off.
- Toys that are likely to be mouthed by infants and toddlers should be rinsed with clean tap water after they are disinfected.

In addition, the CDC recommends the following:

- Children and parents should wash their hands with soap and water or clean their hands with antiseptic hand gel before entering and when

leaving the common play area.

- Toys used in play areas should be made of smooth solid surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected. Avoid toys with small pieces and crevices and those made of fabric or fur.
- Donations of stuffed animals or other toys that cannot be cleaned and disinfected should be accepted only if they are new and then should be distributed to individual children to keep and not kept in common play areas to be shared.
- Toys should be cleaned and disinfected at least three times a day. In addition, they should be cleaned immediately if they are soiled with vomit, stool or other body fluids.

The cleaning of toys (disinfecting) three times a day may put a strain on toy librarians; but may be more important than ever now. #

The World Health Organization recommends the following procedures:

Chlorine Bleach considerations and recommendations:

Household bleach is an effective agent against most bacteria and viruses. It is important to follow recommended dilution guidelines for specific surfaces. Certain precautions should always be adhered to when using bleach, including:

- Dilute and perform disinfection procedures and in a well-ventilated area. Adverse effects of inappropriate mixtures of household cleaners usually are caused by prolonged exposure to an irritant gas in a poorly ventilated area
- Avoid combining bleach with acids (like vinegar) or ammonia (Windex). Potential irritants released from such mixtures are chlorine gas, chloramines and ammonia gas
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment as chlorine bleach is corrosive and irritating to mucosal tissue, skin, eyes and upper and lower respiratory tract

- It is recommended using a "pump" or "pour" bottle instead of a spray bottle to avoid aerosolizing the bleach solution

- Prepare bleach solutions daily.
- Open bottles of chlorine bleach should be discarded after 30 days
- If a splash occurs to mucosal tissues, immediately flush with water"

A number of toy libraries choose not to use a bleach based agent. If you are a facility that does not use a bleach based agent, be sure that it is an EPA-registered BACTERICIDAL agent, not a BACTERIAL STATIC agent. You will also need to be aware of what specific bacteria and viruses the agent kills. This will be listed on the package or package insert.

We hope this information helps and calms nerves as well. We will continue to monitor the situation. #