Harford County Public Library Foundation Raises $50,000 for Bel Air Early Literacy Interactive Space

From the Harford County Public Library:

On December 19th, the Harford County Public Library Foundation turned over a check for $50,000 to the Bel Air Branch for its Children’s Early Literacy Interactive Space.

More than forty partners for the project including elected officials, members of the community, and representatives from several groups who donated to the campaign attended the check ceremony and reception. The Greater Bel Air Community Foundation, the Bel Air Friends of HCPL, the Morris A. Mechanic Foundation, the Bel Air Rotary, and the friends and family of Mary Beth Crisco, and many individual contributors donated to the campaign.

“We are thrilled to celebrate the completion of the Bel Air Early Literacy Center Campaign,” stated Amber Shrodes, HCPL Foundation Director. “It kicked off in October 2010 and now, just 15 months later, $50,000 has been raised for this exciting project which will support the County’s youngest learners. This would not be possible without the support of many generous donors, and I am pleased that so many of them were able to join us for the reception. With their help, we have made a significant investment in our youth.”

The Morris A. Mechanic Foundation, a contributor towards the campaign stated, “Children are a community’s greatest asset; they are our future. Libraries are an integral part of a child’s developmental process and a storehouse of knowledge.”

Expected to be completed by 2013, the Early Literacy Interactive Space will be an invigorating learning environment located in the Children’s Department of the Bel Air Branch, targeted to the youngest library customers and families. Through engaging play, age appropriate materials and access to innovative programs, this dedicated area will encourage the emergent literacy skills essential for school readiness and inspire children to explore literature, music, science and the fine arts.

“Harford County Public Library is committed to providing the necessary skills for early literacy development,” stated Mary Hastler, Library Director. “The library is often a child’s first classroom and a lifetime of learning can begin here. We envision this new interactive learning center to be the beginning of many great learning experiences for our youngest customers!”

Harford County Public Library’s commitment to early literacy has a long history. The Learning and Sharing Collection, created over 35 years ago, is a circulating collection of developmental toys, puppets, puzzles, parenting DVDs, books, and magazines targeted towards children from birth through age five. These kits are housed at the Bel Air and Joppa branches and contain over 16,000 items which can be requested and sent to any branch in Harford County.

The Parent-Teacher Collection is a selection of books that provide parents and caregivers with creative ideas to enhance their interaction with children from birth through 8th grade. Programming at the Library branches includes monthly story times with themes like Babies Love Books, ABC’s and 123?s, and Tales for Twos. Also enhancing early literacy skills, Opening the Gift and Sharing the Gift are Library outreach programs geared toward children who attend daycare. The Library’s circulation numbers speak for themselves when it comes to the early literacy materials: for fiscal year 2010, picture book circulation was over 317,000 and concept book circulation was 20,800. The Learning and Sharing Collection circulated 26,275 items.

An ideal location for the Early Literacy Interactive Space, the Bel Air Children’s Department has served the children and families of the community for 50 years at its current location and has been a destination for many generations of young readers. The Bel Air Branch is the busiest branch in
Harford County with more than 1.3 million items circulated last year, as well as over 132,000 walk-ins and more than 16,000 children, adults and teens attending programs.

Harford County Public Library operates eleven branches located throughout Harford County, Maryland. The library serves over 160,000 registered borrowers of all ages and has an annual circulation of over 4,800,000. Harford County Public Library is committed to connecting people with information and promoting the love of reading within the community.

The Bel Air Early Literacy Interactive Space campaign came to an end with a check presentation from the Harford County Public Library Foundation for $50,000 on December 19. Pictured left to right: Bill Kelly, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation; Jim Welsh, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation; Carolyn Lambdin, Secretary, Bel Air Friends of HCPL; Chad Shrodes, County Councilman; Bill Vanden Eynden, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation; Paige Cox, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation; Terry Troy, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation; Bill Cox, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation; Kathleen Whitehead, Treasurer, Bel Air Friends of HCPL; Linda Van Deusen, HCPL Foundation; Cynthia Hergenhahn, HCPL Foundation; Mark Welsh, HCPL Foundation; Mari Kane, President, Bel Air Friends of HCPL; Mary Hastler, Director, HCPL; Amber Shrodes, Director, HCPL Foundation; Jennifer Vido, HCPL Board of Trustees; Beth LaPenotiere, Branch Manager, Bel Air Branch of HCPL; Susan Burdette, Bel Air Town Commissioner; Vanessa Milio, CEO, Harford County Chamber of Commerce; Jerry and Doris Kavanagh, Morris A. Mechanic Foundation; Beth Hendrix, HCPL Foundation; Richard Crisco, Mark Crisco, Beth Crisco; and Richard Slutzky, County Councilman.