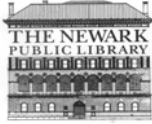


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PRESS RELEASE

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Summer Readers Learn at the Newark Public Library

Xavia and Jaelynn Garcia's mother has been bringing the two sisters to the Newark Public Library's North End Branch since they were small. For the past two summers the siblings engaged in a friendly competition to see who could read the most books in the Library's annual Prudential Summer Reading Challenge.

They are among the hundreds of young people who participated in this year's program and were recognized recently during a celebration at the Main Library marking the end of the six week series.

"While each sister is very competitive, they also are very supportive of one another's reading and very artistic," something that further sparked their interest in the summer program's theme: *Be Creative @ Your Library!*" according to Heather Rivera, the North End Branch children's librarian.

The children's mother, Jessica Rios, a Newark school teacher, said love for the Library is a legacy she has passed on to her children. She too has been coming to the North End Branch since she was a child. "I lived right down the street at Summer and Montclair Avenues. It was the only place my mom let me go by myself," she said.

While her family no longer lives within walking distance of the facility, they are still frequent visitors. Both girls are students at Bethel Christian Academy.

Jaelynn, 10, read 222 books as part of this summer's Reading Challenge; the most of any child at the North End Branch. She likes fiction and non-fiction chapter books and was especially taken with the children's book series *English Roses* written by rock star, Madonna. The story about a clique of young girls, "reminds me of what my friends and I do together," she said.

Having been elected class senator for the past two years, Jaelynn hopes to run for the position again this year as a fifth grader. As for the future, she would like to be an “artist or famous soccer player.” Currently she plays defense with the Just One Soccer League.

Her sister, Xavia, 9, who is entering fourth grade this year, can’t wait to go back to school where she is on the honor roll. She recently started tap dance lessons. Xavia’s favorite subject is science and that’s reflected in her book selections. She likes to read about criminal science, in fact she has a CSI kit and has found books at the North End Branch that help her explore this interest. What does she like best about the Library? “I can rent books and read as many as I want and it’s free! I don’t have to buy the books to read them.”

Similar readership excitement resounds at the Weequahic Branch where Charmaine Murphy has been bringing her daughter, Maureena, and granddaughter, Mikayla, since the family moved to Newark in 2002. Murphy signed the children up for library cards at a block party she attended shortly after relocating to the new neighborhood.

The girls, who are entering second grade next month, come to the branch practically every day. “They are always the first to register for the Summer Reading program!” said Weequahic children’s librarian, Shileen Shaw.

Being the same age, the children relate as sisters and are very interested in story books that are about nature, said Murphy. In fact, one of the most memorable books Maureena read was *The Seven Wonders of North America*. “It was very interesting; we read about Yellowstone, a volcano in Mexico and the Grand Canyon, where there are pink and purple rocks,” she gushed saying she hopes to visit the national treasure with her family.

Having her own library card is important to Maureena, “Whenever I want to read books, which,” she whispered, “is all the time, I can go to the Library where I can take out great books that can teach you a lesson, tell you a good story and give you lots of facts.”

Mikayla says she signed her first library card when she was five and her handwriting has improved since! Having her own card is so important to her she said, “I would tell my friends who don’t have a card to get one. It’s exciting all the books you can read!”

Maureena looks forward to returning to her classes at North Star Academy. “What I like best about school is the writing and reading. It’s a place where you can collect all this wonderful knowledge and get to discover things that you never knew before,” she said.

For Mikayla the Library's summer program gives her the opportunity to express herself reading books and having fun. "One of my friends comes with me and we write about the books together and get to discuss them," she said. The child's favorite summer read was *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Why? "I liked it because the fox got framed and went to jail," Mikayla explained.

The Prudential Summer Reading Challenge at the Newark Public Library aims to prevent summer learning loss with a variety of reading incentives. Fun daily programs including story times, arts & crafts, and even gaming tournaments keep participants engaged in the program. This year the Prudential Foundation donated \$25,000 to The Newark Public Library to promote the six-week summer reading challenge. The New Jersey Statewide Summer Reading Program is cosponsored by the New Jersey Library Association and the New Jersey State Library.