

Library Lines by Ruth Gilbert, Youth Librarian KTL

Summer is coming! Here at the Kirkland Town Library that means we're preparing for a busy few months. We'll have special performers, programs, and reading incentives to keep children and their families reading and visiting all summer long. Summer Reading fun officially starts June 26!

Planning our summer program always reminds me of how supportive the businesses and organizations in our community are. Many businesses sponsor programs at the library or support us in other ways, and we're lucky to have strong relationships with other nonprofit organizations in town. Our community helps to make our work at the library possible.

I'm lucky to see our community grow before my eyes when families connect at storytimes, library patrons chat with our staff, and neighbors run into each other as they browse for books. It's pretty magical to think that each little interaction that happens in our building might strengthen our town.

It's my hope that the books in our collection also help to strengthen our community. Books and stories can help shape the way children see the world. Many picture books and chapter books have themes of community and friendship, and every time a young reader borrows one of those books I like to think that our community is strengthened even more.

To start a conversation about strengthening community at your house, check out one of these titles.

"If You Come to Earth," by Sophie Blackall. How would you describe our planet to an alien who is visiting for the first time? This gorgeously illustrated picture book attempts to answer that question by pointing out the little things that make humans part of a global community despite our many differences. If you pay careful attention to the pictures you might even spy Beyoncé or Ruth Bader Ginsburg, along with other delightful details.

"Thank You, Neighbor!" by Ruth Chan. This adorable picture book is also full of wonderful details but focuses on the gratitude we can feel for our neighbors. A little girl and her dog take a walk and notice all the reasons they can thank their neighbors. Some neighbors help keep their streets safe or clean, and some do little things to take care of each other. All of them deserve a "thank you!" for making the neighborhood feel like a family.

"Every Dog in the Neighborhood" by Philip C. Stead and Matthew Cordell. A little boy wants to know how many dogs are in his neighborhood, and when "City Hall" can't answer his question, his grandmother suggests that he go out and count them himself. While he goes around meeting neighbors and dogs, his grandmother is busy with her own project that "City Hall" doesn't want to help with. The last page of the book shows the wonderful result of their very hard work.

"Big Truck, Little Island" by Chris Van Dusen. This rhyming picture book is based on a true story of neighbors who shared. A very large and heavy truck gets stuck on a narrow road, blocking traffic both ways. When the grownups grow frustrated that they can't get where they need to go, the kids in the cars come together to think of a solution. They all end up trading cars so they can continue on and agree to return the cars to each other later.

"The World Belonged to Us" by Jacqueline Woodson and Leo Espinosa. This picture book zooms in on a specific neighborhood – Brooklyn in the summer, "not so long ago" – but celebrates the magic that children create in their communities when they come together to play. Grown-up readers may feel some nostalgia for their own free-roaming childhoods, and young readers may be inspired to go outside to play with a friend.