

Toybrary— A Lending Library for Toys and so Much More!

Laura Beck

Ten years ago, when Liza Wilson was director of the French school in Austin, she learned about Family Connections, an amazing resource in Austin where people could check out toys. Unfortunately, as many of us likely recall, in spring 2010, Family Connections was the victim of a corrupt executive director and shut down.

One year ago this July, Toybrary Austin opened to fill that gap, as a great lending library of toys for kids from infants to

five years old. Liza got her inspiration not only from Family Connections but also from a visit to a friend in New Zealand, where these library-like resources are all over, in neighborhoods, paid for by the government and free to families. Australia and India have the same resources, and once again, thanks to Toybrary, Austin does too.

As a toy lending library, for \$25 a month, you can take out up to three toys at a time, for as long as a month, or as

quickly as you want to trade them in for something else. Teachers can take out five toys at a time. All toys are timeless, high quality, and a bit more old-school, as in requiring imagination, not batteries. Many are wooden, most are educational, and you can select a focus on math, science, language, music, or art (including great art kits, and tools for crafting projects). Liza, with expertise and training in preschool child education is happy to make suggestions based on each kiddo's unique

personality and interests.

But Toybrary Austin is much more than just the lending, it is also a great community destination. Put it on your summer resource list now! You can drop in anytime for \$3 per kid (no charge for adults) for the DAY! Less than \$5 for the whole day, I tell you! Kids can play, parents can meet up. New parents especially love the kindred spirit support they find at Toybrary.

Formal programming, including things like parenting classes and workshops, take place frequently. Nearly every Saturday there is a "Daddy and Me" playdate with fun themes like Robot Building or reptiles. All summer, Toybrary will host camps for kids of all ages, including Bricks for Kids, Mad Science and others. You can find all programming information and options on the website. And space is available for private events, parenting group meetings, birthday parties, and baby showers. It's all very affordable and with full kitchen facilities and a great, fun, playful setting.

Short term memberships are also available. Imagine grandparents or others having little kiddos come to visit in the Sum-



Toybrary action shots

mer (or next Christmas, or anytime). A 10 day membership lets you stock your house with great age-appropriate toys, and enables the kiddo to swap out and get new goodies while they are visiting. You can also give the gift of the monthly membership or a drop in punch card. So when you can't think of the perfect gift, think Toybrary, as any child's dream toy is likely within its walls.

July 8 will mark one year since Liza opened Toybrary Austin. We wish her happy birthday and thank her for making

Allandale her home base for all the goodness that is Toybrary! Stop by yourself, anytime, or especially on Sunday, July 13, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., for the one-year birthday celebration. You can find out more about that, and all the great resources, classes, events and camps on the website at www.toybraryaustin.com, or just call 512-765-4174. Toybrary Austin is at 7817 Rockwood Lane, 78757, and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with space available for private events any day or time. ♦