



# NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **EARLY LITERACY EXPERTS BRING DIGITAL NEIGHBORHOOD TO LIBRARY'S DOORSTEP**

**(Belcamp, Maryland – April 9, 2015)** It was a beautiful day in the Digital Neighborhood when Fred Rogers Center and Little eLit experts visited the Harford County Public Library to host an engaging and interactive Digital Symposium for families. Claudia Haines, youth services librarian at the Homer (Alaska) Public Library and contributor to the Little eLit blog, and Tanya B. Smith, program coordinator for the Fred Rogers Center Early Learning Environment™, presented workshops at the Bel Air Library on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> and the Abingdon Library on Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss with parents and caregivers the benefits of exploring early literacy with preschoolers.

Presenters and attendees at the symposium recognized it is often a challenge to know how much and what kinds of exposure to digital media are suitable for children. To address these concerns, Haines and Smith emphasized the importance of considering the three C's: child, content and context. "If you're thinking about them and you're intentional about them," Smith said, "your child is going to be fine."

As children played on tablets in the Library's children's section, digital media experts demonstrated story apps for parents and caregivers, showing them how young readers could interact with both pictures and text to enhance their literary experience.

Houda Skiredj was among those parents who attended the workshop at the Abingdon Library. "I came here because I have a 4-year-old who watches a lot of television," she said.

"The presentation is very helpful because it gives me a better understanding of what screen media is healthy."

Families were not the only ones to learn about the potential of digital media, as Library staff from Harford County Public Library and nearby library systems attended a seminar at Harford Community College on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> to learn about strategies for incorporating digital tools into early literacy programming in ways that support early childhood development. Led by Dorothy Stoltz, coordinator of programming and outreach services at Carroll County Public Library, participants discussed current research on new media and discovered how to translate traditional storytelling into the digital realm.

The Digital Symposium kicked off the Library's Little Leapers 3.5 Digital Camp, an expansion of the Little Leapers 3.5 program, which supports the development of digital literacy skills in the Library's youngest customers. Through a series of six sessions, the camp guides parents in teaching their children how to interact with technology in healthy ways. Sessions include "Digital Photography, Photo Editing and Story Telling," "eBooks for PCs and Tablets," "Parts of a Computer and the Mouse," "Searching and Browsing," "Tablet Skills and Apps" and "Typing and Emailing." Little Leapers 3.5 Digital Camp is made possible by a \$10,000 grant from the Comcast Foundation. "The Library is passionate about narrowing the digital divide and ensuring that all our children are ready for school," noted Mary Hastler, CEO.

Each Digital Camp session will be held on multiple dates at several local branches, and Library customers can choose to attend one or all six sessions. Registration for Digital Camp is available through the Library's event calendar at [HCPLonline.org](http://HCPLonline.org).

Harford County Public Library operates 11 branches located throughout Harford County, Maryland. The Library serves over 191,000 registered borrowers of all ages and has an annual circulation of over 4.1 million. Harford County Public Library is committed to connecting people with information and promoting the love of reading within the community.

*Photo caption #1: Phyllis Gallagher, librarian at the Abingdon Library, shows a child how to navigate a tablet while, beyond, parents and caregivers learn about digital literacy at the Abingdon Library's Digital Symposium on Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>.*

*Photo caption #2: Librarians from Harford County Public Library and nearby library systems attended a seminar at Harford Community College on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> to learn about strategies for incorporating digital tools into early literacy programming in ways that support early childhood development.*

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