

Building relationships

Waukesha Library holds Spring Celebration for secondary students and adults with disabilities

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WAUKESHA — The vibe at the Waukesha Public Library on Tuesday was a happy one. People munched on cookies and popcorn while making friendship rocks, making music with sound beams and playing the giant Connect 4 game.

The library hosted the second annual Spring Celebration for secondary students and adults with disabilities. Michele Gagner, librarian and community library liaison, said last year the library had 60 people and this year there were between 90 and 100 people.

"We learned what a great opportunity it was for students to kind of reunite with old teachers, classmates and to look to the future as well," Gagner said.

Last year, Sawdust the therapy horse was unable to attend due to the rain. On Tuesday, Sawdust was there with blinged-out shoes.

Bradley Weickardt, 21, student at Waukesha Transition Academy was enjoying petting the horse and asking the trainer questions. He also loved the opportunity to socialize with peers.

"I like talking to my friends and meeting new friends and field trips," he said.

The event is almost like a graduation or grade promotion party with some students moving to the Waukesha Transition Academy.

Gagner said events such as these are a great way to bring library users together and to celebrate a great year of them coming to the library on a regular basis. The library users are spending time at the library, building relationships and have a feeling that they belong there. Gagner has noticed a difference in the participants she has become familiar with. There has been growth and feeling comfortable in a library setting.

"They know there is a place where they really belong and we are trying to create lifelong learners and library users," she said.

Patty Chones, with the Adaptive Community Approach Program, was on hand to help participants try out the SoundBeam. The instrument has four beams and when you move in front of it, it makes a sound and songs.

"It opens up opportunities for people who might not otherwise be able to move. We have a woman right now in the ACAP and all she can do is move her head and maybe her arms at times. She makes beautiful music,"



Karen Pilarski/Freeman Staff

Patty Chones, with the Adaptive Community Approach Program, was on hand to help participants try out the SoundBeam. The instrument has four beams, and when you move in front of it, it makes a sound and songs. Pictured is Chones helping MaryJo Schmidt with making up a song on Tuesday at the Waukesha Public Library. Tuesday's Spring Celebration was for secondary students and adults with disabilities.

Chones said.

Chones said ACAP has been coming to the library with a group for tabletop activities. They have been trying to get other community people with disabilities to do some table games. They come to the library once a week.

"Young people realize there are opportunities like this for them after they are done with school. I think for families it is really important for them to understand that things are going to end at 21 years old. That's important," she said.

The Waukesha Transition Academy participated in the event. The Academy is for 18- to 21-year-olds with a focus on growing pre-vocational skills, community safety, access and independent living.

"We've worked with Michele Gagn-

er all year. She puts on a program for us twice a month and our students are engaged in the community and learning adult recreation-type skills," Laura Koel, teacher at WTA, said.

There was a group of students from WTA who helped with cooking treats for the event.

The library is very important for students at WTA because there are so many leveled projects and activities they can do with others. Koel added it is not the same activities like they do with a teacher during the day but a different setting.

Adriane Sendzik, WTA teacher, said students come in very joyful every day and have a lot to give.

"It's wonderful to show the community how much they can give and we've been welcomed," Sendzik said.



Luis Walsh attended Tuesday's Spring Celebration for secondary students and adults with disabilities. He was painting a rock to give to a friend.



Sawdust the therapy horse appeared at the Waukesha Public Library on Tuesday for the Spring Celebration for secondary students and adults with disabilities.