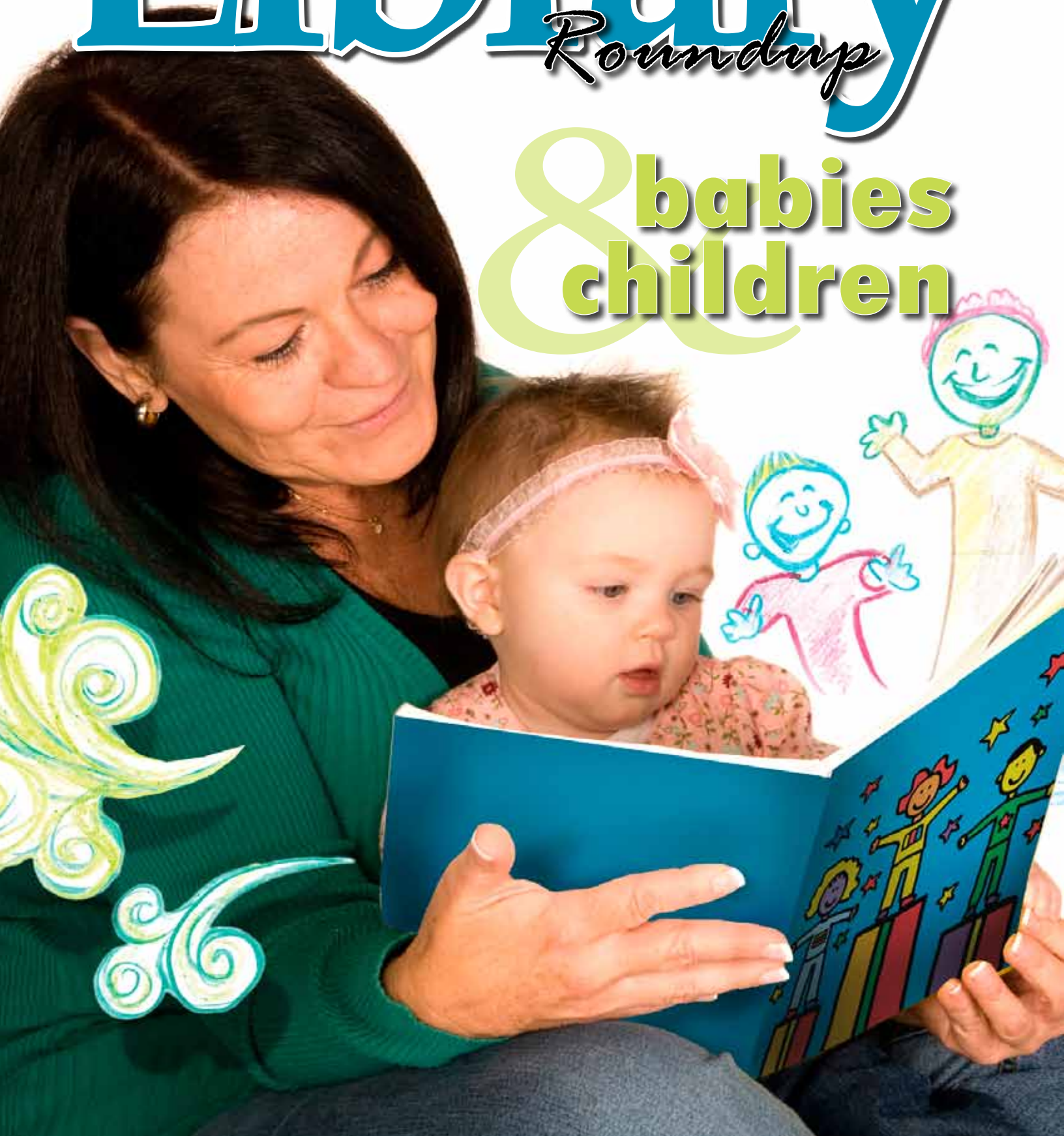


# Wyoming Library Roundup

Summer/Fall 2010

## & babies & children





# Curious George Promotes Families Reading Together

The Advertising Council and the Library of Congress have launched a new series of public service advertisements (PSAs) encouraging parents to read with their children and inspire them to become lifelong learners.

Research conducted by Florida State University found that when parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, children improve in reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills. Additionally, an overall increase in parental involvement in their child's reading makes children more willing to read. When parents and children read together, it also increases the frequency of a child's reading.

The new PSAs feature the iconic children's literary character Curious George. The television, print and outdoor advertisements feature George and his best friend and mentor, "The Man with the Yellow Hat," reading books together. These PSAs encourage parents to "Read to your child today and inspire a lifelong love of reading."

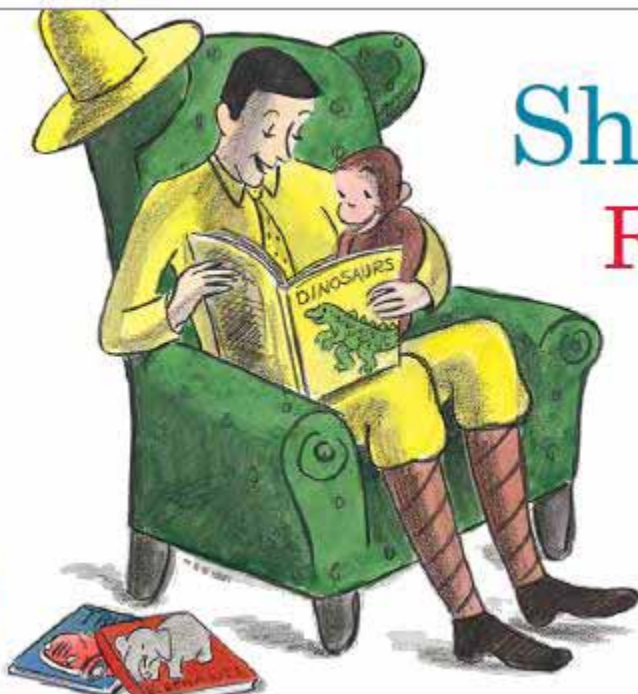
"There is no more important influence in instilling a lifelong love of reading in a child than his or her parent or caregiver," said Deanna Marcum, associate librarian for library services at the Library of Congress. "The Library of Congress is pleased to work with the Ad Council to champion such an important

cause, which inspires curiosity and creativity in young people, who then grow up to become better informed and engaged citizens."

"The new PSAs are so smart and entertaining for parents and children," said Peggy Conlon, president and CEO of the Advertising Council. "Curious George is a timeless character that both children and parents can relate to which makes reading together more enjoyable. The Ad Council truly values our relationship with the Library of Congress on this campaign and together we are dedicated to inspiring children to become lifelong learners through reading."

The campaign, created in partnership with Universal Partnerships & Licensing and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, encourages parents and kids to visit [www.Read.gov](http://www.Read.gov) as a source for discovery, learning, family fun, and to experience the joy of reading.

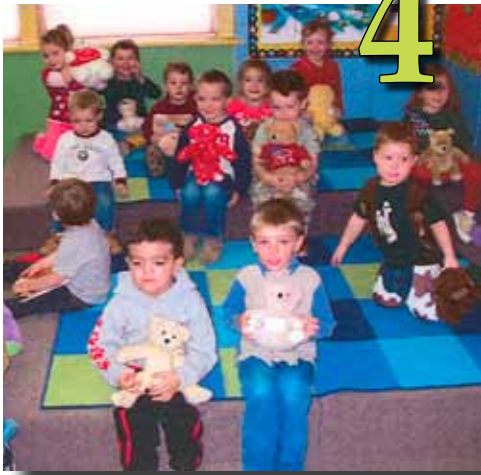
"As one of literature's most beloved characters, Curious George has a powerful ability to link generations," said President of Universal Pictures Partnerships & Licensing Stephanie Sperber. "Universal is thrilled that the Library of Congress and the Ad Council have selected Curious George to promote and inspire the love of reading for children and parents everywhere through this important initiative."



## Share Curiosity. Read Together.

[www.read.gov](http://www.read.gov)





# Wyoming Library Roundup

Summer/Fall 2010

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*Top photo: Bonnie Stahla, Crook County Children's Librarian with a group of preschoolers; Raising Readers board member Sherri Geringer and Raising Readers Vista Volunteer Dana Lehman reading a copy of Little Wyoming; a promotional photo for the 24 More Quality Counts campaign.*

# Wyoming Libraries underwrite PBS shows for kids

Wyoming Public Television provides quality programming for local children. In a cooperative effort to provide educational opportunities statewide, Wyoming's libraries have underwritten children's shows that air in the morning before children leave for school.

The current sponsored programs include Curious George, The Cat in the Hat and SuperWhy. These air between 7:00 and 8:30 a.m.

# Wyoming Library Roundup

Official publication of the  
Wyoming State Library,  
the Wyoming Library Association,  
and the Wyoming Center for the Book  
Volume 52, Number 2, Summer/Fall 2010  
ISSN: 0043-9738

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*On the Cover: Promotional image from the 24 More: Quality Counts campaign, see story on page 11.*

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# KIDS



The Wyoming Library Roundup is produced in part with Library Services and Technology Act federal funds awarded to the Wyoming State Library program from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



“Just one more book... Please!” There is nothing that will bring a smile to a father’s face faster than hearing these words every night before bed.

My wife and I began to read to our daughter Emerson, 3, when she was two days old. We read every day after school and every night before bed. Since my wife and I are both librarians, we fully understand the theory that reading to children everyday increases their cognitive

ability as well as their abstract thinking

skills, but it wasn’t until we began reading to Emmie that we saw how reading can really affect a young child.

On the days that we are able to read books earlier in the day, Emmie seems more energetic and creative. After we read to her, she will spend hours in her room “reading” to herself and telling her stuffed animals stories. She also sits my wife and I down for Emmie story time, both to read to us and to have us read to her. Those are the days that we hear less about wanting to watch a show on television and more about going to the library.

As the immediate Past President of the Wyoming Library Association, I’ve seen what public libraries and their partners do every day to promote and increase lifelong literacy skills. Most public library outlets in Wyoming offer at least one toddler story time each week. Story time is a magical place that children go to hear new and different books than they have at home, learn a song or two, and sometimes do a short craft project. Children leave story time excited about the adventure they just had and the new pile of books they just checked out. Many libraries are able to take this model to the next level and send their outreach staff to local childcare centers to offer onsite story times and book groups. Emmie always looks forward to the library lady’s visit to her school.

Not all literacy efforts begin at the public library. Raising Readers in Wyoming offers free books to children across the state during their well child medical visits. As sad as it sounds, for many children these are the first and only books that they have ever received. Emmie took home the *Big Red Barn* from her doctor’s office after a checkup. I both love and hate this book. I love it because Emmie does, I hate it because she always finds where I hide it and demands that we read it at least twice a week.

# Building Library



# Communities



*Two libraries, both offering story time for small children – but each do it in their own way to serve their unique communities:*

## Story time in a small town

In tiny Sundance, Wyoming (pop. 1,339), story time at the library didn't work for every family. Most parents work during the library's open hours and found it difficult to bring their children. Bonnie Stahla, Crook County Public Library youth services librarian, brings story time to the community where it's needed.

"During the school year, most of my work week is spent out of the library," she said.

Around town, she reads at the local Head Start, at two day care facilities, to four sessions at two different preschools, and to K-4 students at the local public school. As it is with many other children's librarians in Wyoming, outreach has become an

*Bonnie Stahla, Children's Librarian in Crook County, coordinates outreach programs for preschoolers.*

important part of Stahla's job.

"In the past I have also visited some in-home day cares," she said. "I called them and said 'I do these story times and would really like your kids to be a part of it.'"

That's her job outside the library. Inside the library, she coordinates special programming for preschool children throughout the year. Day care providers appreciate it – they enjoy bringing the children and watching them get involved with the programs.

When planning, Stahla picks a different theme to carry out through the week. "This last year I worked with the preschool teachers to give me their lesson plans so I could develop a theme that would fit into their curriculum," she said.

Stahla has been doing this for 11 years. The exciting part for her is that she has watched many local children grow up.

"I look now at the kids who are in high school," she said, "and it's hard to believe I've read to them since



*Bonnie Stahla with a group of preschoolers in Crook County.*

they were just little kids. Several of them have become regular library users. They don't all come to the library to check out books every time, but they're here and they use the computers and other things."

To most of them, she'll always be Miss Bonnie from story time. "When I recently went through the local parade the little kids were yelling out 'Miss Bonnie, Miss Bonnie!'"

As another form of outreach for the library, Miss Bonnie is teaching the art of storytelling to older students. This past year Newcastle High School's Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) students started helping Stahla during her storytelling sessions.

"They read to them, and involved the little ones with some finger plays," she said. "The older students were somewhat hesitant at first, but I think next year will be even

better."

Stahla says the FCCLA students constantly ask how she feels so comfortable working with the younger ones. How does she always know how to answer their questions?

"I tell them I've been doing this for 10 years. The little kids really look up to you. They're just excited for you to be here reading to them."

## Making the college a community

In Cheyenne, Laramie County Community College's Ludden Library has a much different type of community to reach. The library began offering story time spring semester 2010 for the college's Children's Discovery Center, a full day pre-school program for children

of students and faculty, as well as other local residents.

"We are really trying to make the college feel more like a community," librarian Meghan Kelley said, "and the Children's Discovery Center is definitely a part of that."

The library created several different story times for

different age groups at the Discovery Center—four to five classes a week for children ranging from two to five years old. "We started a little bit later in the semester and just tried to see what would work best for us," Kelley said.

Library technician Cindy McCormick has been storytelling for years. When they started, they aimed for 45 minutes of story time, but they found it wasn't ideal.

"That's a long time to try and hold a child's attention," McCormick explained. "Sometimes that's a long time to try to hold an adult's attention." They scaled it back to 30.

Children develop so fast that story time means different things to different ages. "As the children get older," Kelley said, "we can do more things with them as their understanding and attention span change. The older kids are able to have story time with the addition of an activity, finger puppets and other

fun things that really keep them engaged.”

McCormick says it has been really fun to see the children change and grow not only physically but in the understanding of material.

“You really have to work on making your material age appropriate,” she said. “Some people think you can just read any book to get the children engaged, but it’s really best to know what works best with each group of kids. How a first grader and a third grader think can be very different.”

They emphasize the importance of telling children the right story, and expanded on that this fall when Kimberly Fields and her Early Childhood Literature class started helping with story times. Her students sign up for one story to do within the library with the day care

**“As a library, we really try to be supportive of the programs offered at LCCC and we are working to build the college as a real community. It’s a special kind of community, but it still is a community.”**

*~Meghan Kelley, LCCC Librarian*

children. Early Childhood Literature is the only library science class offered at LCCC.

“We need to show students why it’s important to choose books well and what makes a good book,” Fields said.

Kelley and McCormick plan to be guest speakers in Fields’s class. This is the first semester Fields has taught Early Childhood Literature, and she expects the librarians’ roles to evolve in the following semester.

The collaboration of the library, the class and the day care just makes sense, Kelley said. “As a library, we really try to be supportive of the programs offered at LCCC and we are working to build the college as a real community. It’s a special kind of community, but it still is a community.”

*Cindy McCormick, an LCCC library technician, conducting a story time at the Children’s Discovery Center.*



# Little Wyoming

Lots of  
Fun with  
Rhyming  
Riddles



Wyoming babies and toddlers now have a special board book that celebrates the Cowboy State – *Little Wyoming*, from Sleeping Bear Press.

The book is illustrated by Helle Urban and written by well-known Wyomingite Gene Gagliano from Buffalo, a children's author who wrote *C is for Cowboy* and *Four Wheels West*, both also from Sleeping Bear Press.

*Elton Randall reads Little Wyoming to his son Devin.*

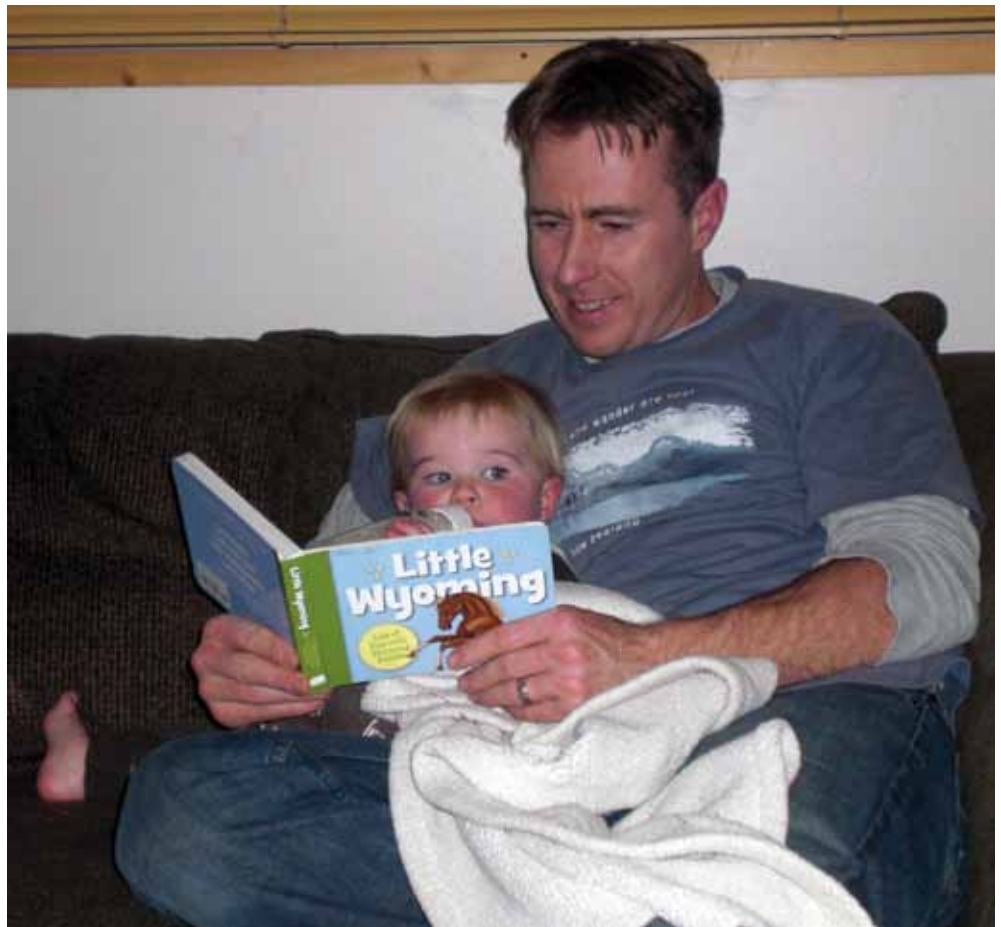
*Little Wyoming* is a series of riddles that celebrates some of the best-known things about the Cowboy State. When Gagliano was chosen to write it, “I sat down and brainstormed a list of ideas as to what is really special to Wyoming,” he said.

“I wanted to make sure I included some Wyoming icons people were really familiar with,” he said, “especially if you were a little kid who lived here.”

Numerous ideas popped to the surface, including rodeo, antelope, bison and so many more, but, there was a limit to how many he could use.

“Old Faithful is very popular so I wanted to make sure I included that,” he said. “If you go anywhere in Wyoming you’re bound to see cattle, so I wanted to include them since ranching is such a big part of this state.”

Through his years of teaching, Gagliano learned that children



love dinosaurs. Really, really love dinosaurs. So, *Little Wyoming* also includes the triceratops.

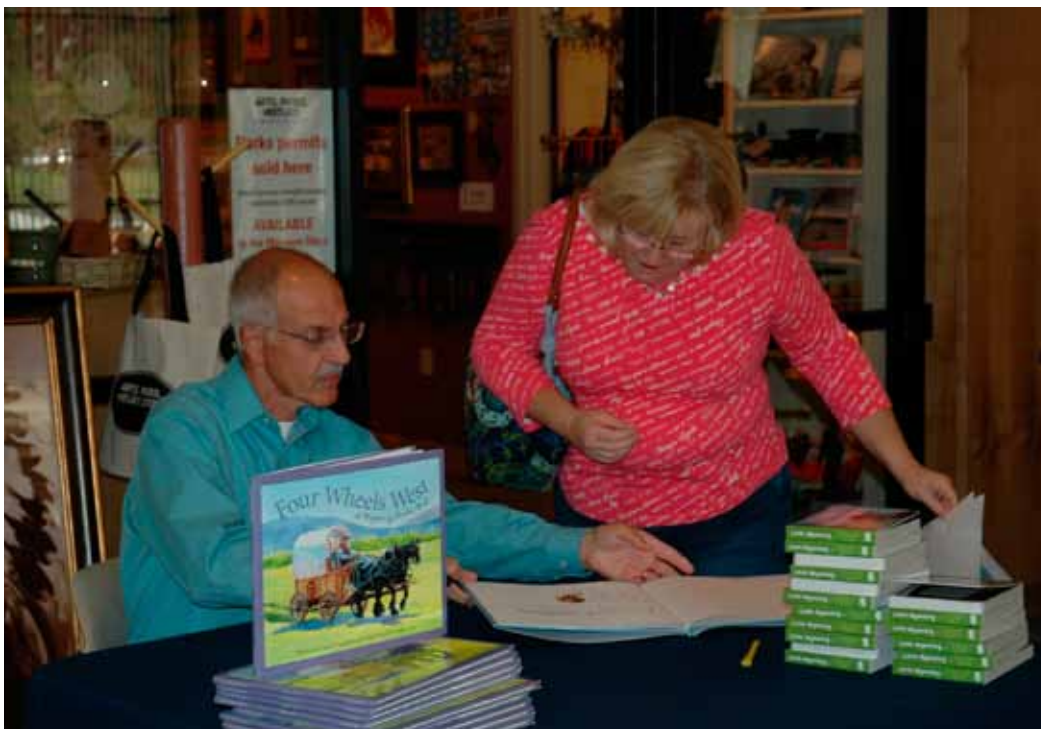
Writing the book had its challenges. “I wanted to make sure the rhymes

were good,” Gagliano said, “and written so that children could really understand it. My goal has always been to write good wholesome books for children that encourage reading, writing and the arts. This book is a perfect example.” Although *Little Wyoming* is targeted to the four-and-under set, older children also enjoy it.

He added, “The illustrator did such a nice job of completing the package.”

Gagliano’s first book signing at the Wyoming State Museum in August was also the first time he had his hands on a finished copy of the book. “I walked in that morning and there they were,” he said. “I sat down right there and read it.”

*Author Gene Gagliano at the first book signing for Little Wyoming, held at the Wyoming State Museum.*



They've been selling like hot cakes, Gagliano said: "I really liked the book, and thought it was good, but you never know how a book is going to sell until you get it out there." He's seen it sell out at more than one book signing, and the book is already on its second printing.

The Wyoming State Library has also been able to make *Little Wyoming* available to county libraries at cost, enabling them to sell them for \$10 each as a fundraiser for the Wyoming Library Endowment Challenge, a state-funded initiative that matches local donations 1:1, 2:1 or 3:1, depending on the county's assessed valuation.

As Gagliano said, they are going like hotcakes. In tiny Ten Sleep, the library sold 100 copies. Carbon County Library System is selling the book at each of its eight libraries. "They've been selling steadily," said

director Kristin Herr, "and I expect more to sell in December as people buy the books as stocking stuffers. It's a simple way to promote the endowment and make a few bucks. We'll probably sell around 200 books before Christmas."

Goshen County Library director Isabel Hoy said they are also selling *Little Wyoming* as a fundraiser. Her library is emphasizing Goshen County's 3:1 match. "It's pretty powerful to show the board book with the comment 'it is really a \$40 book' or 'it is a \$40 deposit to our future,'" Hoy said. "These books are a great way to share a piece of Wyoming."

The Wyoming Center for the Book, a program of the Wyoming State Library, donated 2,000 copies of *Little Wyoming* to Raising Readers, a program that distributes free books during children's regular well-child

health care visits. (See story on page 10)

"*Little Wyoming* has been an exciting project," said State Librarian Lesley Boughton. "We've been able to use *Little Wyoming* to support our libraries and support early literacy efforts. It's worked exactly the way we'd hoped it would."

She added, "You don't often see a Wyoming-themed book for children who aren't even reading yet. It's a great little book."

*The Wyoming Center for the Book, a program of the Wyoming State Library, donated 2000 copies of Little Wyoming to Raising Readers. Pictured below: Col Tim Sheppard, Raising Readers board member; Judy Catchpole, Raising Readers board member; Tina Lyles, Center for the Book Coordinator; Sherri Geringer, Raising Readers board member and Dana Lehman, Raising Readers Vista Volunteer in Cheyenne.*



**24  
MORE.**

# ways to help Wyoming's children

Wyoming now has “24 More” ways for parents to interact with their kids to help their development. Go camping in the living room – it improves their creative thought, language and social skills. Or sort socks by color for better math, visual discrimination and fine motor skills.



“24 More” is the newest public awareness campaign from the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services’ Quality Counts program. The campaign targets parents and caregivers, highlighting 24 different activities to share with children.

“These themes are aimed at finding out how you can have a positive interaction with kids while doing the simplest of things from driving in the car to looking at the clouds,” said Workforce Services Director Joan Evans.

“24 More” activities promote development in categories such as cognitive and general knowledge, physical development and motor

skills, social/emotional, language and communication. Each of the 24 themes falls into at least one category, but some include all of them.

Parents and caregivers using “24 More” might blow bubbles, act out a scene from a movie or pick the evening’s dinner menu based on what shapes they see while looking at clouds. All of these help with a child’s learning and development. And while these 24 activities are featured, there are many more ideas on the Quality Counts website, searchable by age group, skills that can be developed and how long the activity takes. Print materials are also available.

Evans said they are using a lot of grass roots marketing with this campaign, including “ambassadors” who distribute kits in Wyoming communities. They have used any means possible to communicate their message, from distributing antibacterial spray to making hospital visits.

“There’s a lot of training being done in the local communities where they go over the project, packet, and ideas. People get lists of resources, providers and lots of valuable information,” Evans said.

Some people might find the collaboration of an initiative for children and Wyoming Workforce Services an odd match, but Evans

## 24 quality interactions you probably already do with your

1. **Sound effects while feeding fuels imagination.**
2. **Singing helps with speech development.**
3. **“Tummy Time” builds strength and flexibility.**
4. **Reading to your child increases brain development.**
5. **Threading a macaroni necklace improves fine motor skills.**
6. **Becoming a human surfboard contributes to balance and coordination.**
7. **Pudding and marshmallow drawings increase creativity.**
8. **Listening cements your relationship.**
9. **Counting steps while walking helps in learning numbers.**
10. **Performing a story with puppets strengthens the ability to form sentences.**
11. **Teaching the process of cooking helps in learning to follow directions.**
12. **Counting change helps teach lessons in early math.**
13. **Changing an article of clothing to see if it’s noticed helps improve visual memory skills.**
14. **Letting your child order her own food helps her work on independence.**
15. **A few pots and pans as a kitchen band strengthens hand-eye coordination.**
16. **Naming bugs opens the door for originality.**
17. **A jar of beans can improve estimating skills.**
18. **Imitating your favorite animal promotes problem solving skills.**

sees it as a logical partnership.

“Really to me, early learning and our children being successful means we’ll have a strong pipeline of work-ready individuals going into the workforce system,” she said.

“Developing our youth is critically important. Being sure they’re ready for kindergarten and being successful in school means we won’t see so many children in our youth programs or hopefully our literacy or numeracy rates will improve.”

Evans says development of youth is one portion of the program. Another part is for parents to have access to quality child care so they can be productive in the workplace.

“We hear all the time about someone who could be out there working and strengthening our economy,” she said, “but they don’t have a place to take their kids, so they’re not productively engaged in the workforce. In a way, this is the backbone of the whole work system.”

Workforce Services has contracted with other groups around the state and experts in the field to make valuable information available to parents and child care providers.

“Between our staff and experts in the state, we’re putting information together in a fun and easy to understand format that is age appropriate.”

Recently, Evans heard a statistic that correlates early school success with the projected future need for correctional institutions. “If our kids are failing at an early age,” she said, “our correctional system is saying we know we’re going to see them on the other side.”

“I think this program is a way of investing early to prevent seeing our kids in the juvenile justice or correction system, and giving parents a resource that is not expensive but is available and easy to use.”

For more information on Quality Counts and the 24 More campaign, visit <http://www.wyqualitycounts.org/>.

## child everyday...

19. Helping a child mail a letter can improve understanding of community systems.
20. A game of “Family Photo Go Fish” gives an appreciation of culture.
21. An indoor fort ignites imagination.
22. Stacking rocks helps with fine motor skills.
23. Having a tea party can improve social skills.
24. A couple of straws and cotton balls strengthens the muscles for speech.



# Raising Readers

Many of us might remember getting a lollipop from the doctor as a reward for being (reasonably) good at our childhood checkups. Wyoming children get an even better and more lasting treat – a book of their own to keep – through the Raising Readers program.

Raising Readers distributes books at well-child health care visits at doctor's offices and county public health offices around the state, covering all 23 counties. Nearly 160,000 books have been distributed to Wyoming children since the program's inception in 2002.



Books are provided to children at their well-child health care visits or immunizations at ages 2, 4, 6, 12, 15, and 18 months, and 2, 3, 4 and 5 years of age. In fact, the Raising Readers website says, when parents are given “prescriptions” to read by their child’s doctor they are four times more likely to read and share books with their children.

“Many parents appreciate receiving the books, not only for the great benefits of getting a book for their child,” said Jolene Olson, Raising Readers executive director, “but it is also a great distraction when their child is getting a vaccination. When the parent and child read the new book together it is a great bonding moment and the anxiety over a doctor’s visit quickly dissipates.”

*A Wyoming mom with her daughter at a Bookfest and Feast event in Cheyenne.*

Volunteers in Service to America (AmeriCorps VISTA) Raising Readers volunteer Dana Lehman concurs. “We have heard from several nurses and doctors who say that the books are an incentive for parents to bring their children in,” he said.

He added that it’s not just a free book giveaway program. “The books we distribute are age appropriate from two months to five years,” he explained. “We also provide reading tips tailored to the age groups and really work to encourage early childhood literacy.”

Books are chosen by a team of Wyoming experts in early childhood development. The team can include speech language pathologists, professors, librarians and a Spanish instructor for selecting of Spanish-language materials. Titles are changed periodically so that in a family with multiple children, the younger children will get different books than their older siblings did.

The Governor’s Early Childhood Development Council adopted Raising Readers in Wyoming in response to research on early brain development. Initial funding came from a grant from the PacificCorp Foundation for Learning, the philanthropic arm of Pacific Power.

Currently, grants, donations and fund raising events support the program. Lehman is one of three VISTA volunteers who cover the state, and the Wyoming State Library helps support Raising Readers by providing an office for Lehman. Each VISTA is responsible for a handful of counties, and they organize events with the help of community

volunteers who put in an estimated 1,000 hours a year.

Along with its volunteers, Raising Readers depends on its active board of directors to spread the word. “We give lots of presentations in the different communities,” Lehman said, “and count on those community leaders to help us find potential sponsors, donors and people to attend our events.”

One of the main events organized by the VISTA volunteers is called the Bookfest and Feast, a family-style breakfast with an entrance fee of only \$5 per family with a raffle and silent auction. Bookfests and Feasts are held in Laramie, Cheyenne, Sheridan and Casper with great support from their communities. For example, Lehman said, at this year’s Cheyenne Bookfest and Feast Triumph High School donated its site for the venue and had its students prepare the food, which was donated by the Kiwanis Club.

There are also several smaller fundraisers at businesses like Barnes and Noble, Country Buffet and

Baskin Robbins. During those events, these businesses contribute a percentage of a specific day’s sales to the organizations.

“VISTA volunteers before us did a good job at scouting out what businesses might be interested in working with us,” Lehman said. “Also, our other volunteers also play an important role in finding businesses for us to get involved with.”

Raising Readers is based on a similar program in Maine. The Governor’s Early Childhood Development council adopted Raising Readers in 2002 as a way to encourage both the mental and physical well being by reading to young children and getting them age-appropriate immunizations. For more information, visit the Raising Readers website at <http://raisingreadersinwyoming.org/>.

*A high school volunteer reads to local children at a Bookfest and Feast event sponsored by the Cheyenne Raising Readers program.*



# Books & Babies



You're never too young for a good book.

That's the idea behind the Book Babies Program at the Albany County Library in Laramie, a program for little ones from six weeks up to 18 months old. Many libraries have similar programs to encourage parents to read to their children at the earliest opportunity.

"Your baby doesn't have to sit in your lap to be appreciating or understanding what's going on," said Deb Kassner, library public services assistant. "Sometimes parents feel weird when their kids aren't sitting still or listening to what's going on. Even if your baby gets off your lap, you may feel odd, but keep reading and then they'll see that you read and that reading is interesting."

The primary goal, at this stage, is not learning to read. The idea is that the infants can come in, listen, visit and touch things. They encourage the parents to let the children get up and walk, crawl or roll around.

Albany County Library put together Book Babies as a weekly group of babies, caregivers, books

*A baby lapsit program encourages babies to clap their hands at the Alpine Branch Library.*



*It is a full house at the Sublette County Library in Pinedale during the story time program for toddlers.*

“It’s been a really good place for them. It just gives them a place to sort of bond with other people going through the same experience,” Kassner said. “A lot who have never had a child, are older, or men in particular can feel uncomfortable making animal noises or being silly or getting into a book on a child’s level. I tell them if you feel silly, you’re probably doing it right.”

The program helps caregivers realize that this kind of interaction is what the baby really needs at this time. After people enroll a child more than once, they usually move on to the toddler story times.

“We see kids from 0-5 before they go off to kindergarten. It’s kind of neat because sometimes it feels like we are raising them right along with their parents. The more things we can do here for them, the better off they will be,” Kassner said. At Albany County, children truly get an opportunity to grow up in the library.

and songs. “It started out as more informative,” Kassner said, “but we’ve really made it a more relaxed format.” Grant funding allowed the library to purchase 10 sets of 12 to 20 books to start the program.

The group is limited to 10, and the only rule is that every baby needs a lap—it doesn’t really matter who that is. “Sometimes it’s the parents, other times it can be grandparents or even siblings,” she says.

The program provides a space for parents and babies to connect and for caregivers to learn from each other. “Once in a while we get a really dynamic group of parents who share cooking tips, teething tips or they’ll just unload on each other talking about how they were up all night and what not.”

The program works even better for

fathers and grandparents. Kassner said she had one grandfather who came to three or four sessions and she was surprised at how much his comfort level evolved in the program.



*A Laramie mom reads to her children at the library story time.*

# Reading to your Kids

When Steve Bialostok, PhD, taught first grade and kindergarten in California for many years, “What really struck me at the time is how parents would constantly hear the mantra: read to your kids, read to your kids, but they never really understood why or what that did,” he said.

Bialostok is Associate Professor of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at the University of Wyoming, and the author of the book, *Raising Readers: Helping Your Child to Literacy*.

Parents are constantly trying to figure out ways to jump start their children for elementary school and kindergarten. At the time he wrote his book, in the 1990s, there was a strong push for reading to children. Bialostok believed parents needed to

help parents understand the process of how their children learn to read.

“My book wasn’t so much to teach parents how to read to the kids, but

to understand the process by which kids learn to read naturally,” he said.

Bialostok said it’s not the parents’ job to make sure children are reading every day or five times a day. What’s important is for parents to give

their children life experiences to help books gain meaning. A child’s brain is built to understand and to make sense of the world in all forms, including reading.

“Reading is much more complex than the average parent thinks of

“Probably one of the most important things a parent can do is bring background knowledge, experience and understanding to whatever the child is reading.”

~ Steve Bialostok, PhD

[it] as in terms of just sounding out the words. Reading is the process of making meaning—something a child does from the time he or she is born,” he said. “Probably one of the most important things a parent can

do is bring background knowledge, experience and understanding to whatever the child is reading.”

Bialostok says that parents should read to their children but take the child’s lead on what he wants to read and how much. “For instance, when

my son was a child he wanted to read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

We read that book over and over again.”

This is an important process.

Kids get hooked on a single book no matter what a parent tries to do, and after time the child begins to recite the book by memory.

“The process of memorization is absolutely critical and that all came

because of the parent reading that book to the child 100 times,” he said. “What happens is we see that child emerge naturally into reading. They take these memorized books and in a sense start to pretend to read, but as they do this they’re starting to notice letters and words on the page.” This allows the child to start making sense of the book and starts the child reading before he or she is formally taught.

More and more, schools have started to count on home time to be another form of learning through homework and other exercises. According to Bialostok, there is nothing wrong with continuing education at home, unless it becomes forced and a child starts to create a negative association with these tasks.

“The last thing you want to do is have your child read over and over again, and then not want to read on his own,” he said. “I worry about the kind of pressure being put on children at home that are already being placed on them at school.”

It’s important for a parent to remember, Bialostok said, to keep reading aloud with your child as long as they want to hear it. For example, parents of a sixth grader who struggles with reading should continue to read aloud as long as the child still wishes to hear it. This allows him or her to hear and learn the language as well as hear a parent sometimes fumble through some wording.

“It shows the child that sometimes we all struggle with learning

something, and very few people can read a book and get all of the vocabulary right and understand it,” he said. “Many kids who have struggled to read at school have been saved by parents who just continue to read to them.”

Bialostok said the best thing about reading aloud together is not necessarily the skills learned, but the positive result it has on the bond between child and parent.

“Reading with your child establishes a certain kind of relationship,” he said. “Children often associate this with closeness, and the love for a parent carries onto the book itself and not just the parent—creating a real love for reading.”



# PURE IMAGINATION

## Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Delivers Books to Southwest Wyoming Children



United Way of Southwest Wyoming (UWSW) is launching its Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Southwest Wyoming program. With the help of a \$38,000 grant from the Wal-Mart Foundation, parents in Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater and Uinta Counties can enroll their children ages birth to five years into the program. Through this program, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails one book a month for free, to every enrolled child's home.

The Imagination Library began in 1996 when Dolly Parton decided to foster a love of reading in her county and to ensure that all children would have books, regardless of their family's income. The program was so successful that over time it expanded internationally. To partner, UWSW raises funds that pay for the

shipping of the books, make the program accessible to all preschool children in their area, promote the program, register the children, and enter the information into a database. From there The Dollywood Foundation manages the system to deliver the books to children's homes. United Ways across the United States have partnered with this program.

The cost to the community is minimal – for Southwest Wyoming, it's estimated at only \$35 per year, per child. Quite the bargain, considering the lasting impact on children.

This effort grew out of the region's specific needs. When Kathy Tacke was hired as the director of community impact UWSW, she was charged with performing a community assessment to identify local issues. One of the issues was a lack of early education initiatives.

"Our teen pregnancy rate is high, and our graduation rate is low," Tacke explained. "We realized we needed to start writing grants

to begin some early childhood education initiatives to assist kids from the get go.”

Grant funding enabled UWSW to hire Katie Monroe as director of regional partnerships to take on this new initiative and the Wyoming Kids First of Sweetwater County program, which has now been taken over by Joe Barbuto.

Part of the grant was completing a needs assessment of issues surrounding children up to age eight. Out of that, Tacke said, “Our focus became an early childhood initiative to create a system of care for children that looked beyond education.”

Helping parents support their children at home was a priority. “We wanted to look at the family as a whole with a family-centered practice that took the whole family as a unit as opposed to just looking at one child and how we could help them,” Tacke said.

In addition, regional reading scores from the third grade PAWS (Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students) were below the state’s average. UWSW made it a goal to work with the educational community to bring the PAWS scores up.

During the time UWSW was assessing these issues, a local resident came to UWSW to ask how to get the Dolly Parton Imagination Library implemented in their area. This offered a potential solution.

“We looked at the PAWS scores and said, wow, this could really be something that could help here,” said Suzanne Zutter, executive director at

UWSW. “We know that if you can’t read then you can’t do math, you can’t do science, and you struggle with spelling and writing. Literacy is the backbone to education.”

Zutter said communities that have implemented the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program have had unbelievable outcomes. Children who participate in the program are more prepared for kindergarten and are better readers by the time they reach eight years old, according to Dollywood Foundation’s statistics.

In the program’s first year, it will serve 1,512 kids under age five providing more than 18,000 books. “The most exciting part is that the books are all age appropriate so infants or toddlers are getting books developed specifically for them,” Barbuto said.

About 90 percent of the books are hardback, and books are rotated on a five-year cycle to reduce the chance of siblings receiving the same books. Children only receive two of the same books in that cycle, their first and their last, which both have letters from Dolly Parton herself. All of the books provided to children are through Penguin Publishing.

UWSW wants to give families more than free books to support their children’s development. “We want to provide parents with tools to be able to work with the books,” Barbuto said.

To achieve this, the John P. Ellbogen Foundation is providing each child with the book *Every Child Ready to Read*. This is in addition to a \$10,000 grant the Ellbogen

Foundation made in support of the Imagination Library program.

“[The book] is constructed like a calendar, and has tips for developing your child’s early literacy skills based on their age,” Barbuto said. “It also has ideas for fun games that a parent can play with their child to make them a better reader.” *Every Child Ready to Read* is also available in Spanish.

The UWSW plans to document progress made during the program. The organization is working with a childcare provider in Wamsutter to track their students from infancy through third grade.

If a child is enrolled in the program from start to finish, by the time he or she reaches age five, the program will have supplied the child with 60 books.

“As more kids sign up, fundraising is only going to become more and more important,” Barbuto said. “This program is really exciting, and one of the best features is that United Way doesn’t have to handle the books. They go straight to the home allowing the children to interact with the book right away.”

Availability will be dependent upon available funds. Only children that live in Lincoln, Uinta, Sublette and Sweetwater counties are eligible. Contact United Way of Southwest Wyoming at 404 N Street, Ste 301, Rock Springs, WY 82901 or by phone at (307) 362-5003. To donate online to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Southwest Wyoming, visit [www.swunitedway.org/give](http://www.swunitedway.org/give) (scroll to bottom of page).

<http://will.state.wy.us/roundup>

The Wyoming Library Roundup is a quarterly publication of the Wyoming State Library, the Wyoming Library Association and the Wyoming Center for the Book. If you would like to continue to be on our mailing list, if your address has an error that needs correction or you know of someone who would like their name added or you would like your name removed from our mailing list, please send your request to: Wyoming State Library, Publications and Marketing Office, 2800 Central Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002.

# FUN AND LEARNING

## Outreach kits available at Wyoming's libraries

Want to get a preschooler's attention? Speak softly, and carry some big, big teeth. And a really big toothbrush to match.

These props are part of the "Teeth" themed Early Childhood Outreach Program (ECHO) kits, available through Wyoming libraries. There are 10 themes – Teeth, Snow, Doctor, Garden, Food, Friends, Harvest, Healthy Habits, Beach, and I Am Special.

Each kit contains children's books and a curriculum/activity guide plus some combination of big puppets, finger puppets, props and video. In different kits you'll find garden tools, a snowman puppet with button eyes and a carrot nose, and a big plush hat in the shape of a pizza. These are designed to be a complete early childhood program in a big tote bag for day care providers, parents or anyone who is looking for fun educational material for young children.

ECHO originated at the Laramie County Library System (LCLS) The library's outreach coordinator, Judy Norris, explained that they had begun offering story times at local day care facilities to take the

library's staff and services outside its walls. "We filled up our spots, and I started to get very involved in the child care facilities around town," she said.

There was so much demand, they added hours and

programming and then hit on the idea of creating kits on themes such as "Cat and Mouse" or "Rabbit." A Wyoming Department of Health grant enabled them to take the program statewide – 70 kits now circulate throughout the state, available not just at the libraries where they're held, but at any Wyoming library through interlibrary loan.

Because the statewide kits were funded by the Wyoming Department of Health, many have health and wellness themes. For example, the "Doctor" and "Teeth" kits both take the scariness out of visiting their doctor or dentist at the same time they promote reading and learning. A day care provider might check out a kit and use it to provide a whole week of great themed programs.

Check your local library to check out an ECHO kit for your children.

