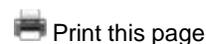


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Hardesty ranked among best children's libraries in U.S.

BY GINNIE GRAHAM World Staff Writer

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Calling the 420-seat Connor's Cove the "Wow Factor," a national website has named the Hardesty Library among the top three best children's libraries in the United States.

Hardesty, 8316 E. 93rd St., is part of the Tulsa City-County Library system and received the most visitors of any branch with 375,900 visitors (from July 2010 to June 2011). Only Central Library received more visitors (412,573).

Livability.com ranked the branch third in the nation for its children's programming, specifically referring to the nautical-themed theater.

"Connor's Cove is hands down the best performance venue for children in the state," states Monty Harper, a children's songwriter, in the Livability.com article. "It's just the right size, large enough to seat a good crowd, but small enough to feel intimate. The design is perfect."

A jungle-themed mural with palm trees and vibrant colors is showcased in the children's area, which includes "kid-friendly computers," educational toys, games, music, movies and books.

A pirate theme dominates Connor's Cove and its lobby, complete with a ship's wheel, treasure chests, parrots and boats. The theater walls are painted to show illuminated ships when the lights are off.

"Hardesty Regional Library is the reigning crown jewel in the Tulsa City-County Library," said Gary Shaffer, Tulsa City-County Library CEO. "It is our premier location for children's services. We want to provide resources and programs to encourage children to become readers so that they can have a better chance at an education and grow up to compete locally."

An average of 367 children and youth visit the area each week, the website states.

The library system also has a bookmobile, a "Reading Roadshow" that travels to child-care centers and story times for different age groups.

"The children's section of any neighborhood public library is invariably the first public place where children are exposed to educative activities," stated Vanessa Morris, professor of Library Science at Drexel University, in the Livability.com article.

"Typically, children will visit the public library before they enroll into preschool. Thus the children's library is a vital starting point for intellectual, academic and social inspiration for all generations."

Livability.com states its staff has spent more than 20 years finding "the good stuff in small to mid-sized communities" in the U.S. It is a resource of more than 500 of America's best places "to live, work, play, explore and belong."

In compiling the children's libraries list, it sought out institutions in cities that have gained recent attention for youth programming and activities.

"We looked for libraries that have visually appealing spaces for children, a full range of programs, large collections, integrate new technologies and proven success in getting kids to engage," the website states.

Top 10 children's libraries in the United States

Livability.com

1. ImaginOn The Joe & Joan Martin Center in Charlotte, N.C.
2. Vancouver Community Library in Washington
3. Hardesty Library in the Tulsa City-County Library system
4. Scottsbluff Public Library in Nebraska
5. Iowa City Public Library in Iowa City, Iowa
6. El Paso Public Library in El Paso, Texas
7. Laramie County in Cheyenne, Wyo.
8. Brentwood Library in Brentwood, Tenn.
9. Birmingham Public Library in Alabama
10. Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County in Ohio

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Associated Images:



Preschoolers including Addelyn Villines, 3 (middle), of Broken Arrow receive stickers from Josie Thiesse after she read them a story at Hardesty Library on Tuesday. Hardesty was named one of the top children's libraries. JAMES GIBBARD/Tulsa World

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