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FEATURED

La Plata library invites kids to 'Hop on the Bus'

By Jamie Anfenson-Comeau janfenson-comeau@somdnews.com Aug 17, 2016



STAFF PHOTOS by Jamie Anfenson-Comeau

Children, parents and family members line up at the La Plata branch library to take a trip to Mary H. Matula Elementary School as part of the library's "Hop on the Bus" program Thursday.

Children beginning pre-kindergarten and kindergarten this year got a preview Thursday morning of what it will be like to ride a bus to school, courtesy of the Charles County Public Library's La Plata branch.

"You might be wondering what's going on, you're not at home with mom, you're with a bunch of new people and you're learning stuff. You might feel a little intimidated. Hopefully this will help," said Donnie Storms, children's supervisor for the library, addressing children just before they got on a school bus — many for the first time in their lives.

This was the third year the library has hosted "Hop on the Bus," which began as the brainchild of Sarah Guy, the library's program coordinator, Storms said.

"She had the idea of doing this program, and I had never heard of it done before through a library," Storms said. "The first year went so well, that every year after, I've said, 'We're doing that again.'"

More than 20 3- to 5-year-olds attended the event, which began in the library's meeting room with Storms reading two stories about school buses and going to school: "The Bus for Us" by Suzanne Bloom and "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn.

After the stories, children and parents filed out to climb onto a yellow school bus and take a trip to Mary H. Matula Elementary School.

At the school, students practiced lining up and getting off and on the bus before returning to the library.

For many of the children, it was their first time riding a school bus. Kasey Hinton said she wasn't ready for her 5-year-old son Billy to start kindergarten.

"I'm trying to pretend, for his sake, but I'm so not ready," Hinton said.

For his part, Billy said he was excited to be starting kindergarten. Asked what he was most looking forward to, Billy said, "the toys."



Michelle Dietrich said her daughter, Kylie, 4, will be starting pre-kindergarten in the fall. It was her first time on a school bus.

"I'm trying to get her exposed to the buses, to get used to them," Dietrich said.

Storms said he hopes the event will help children with any fears or anxieties they may have about riding a school bus or starting a new school.

"The school bus is a big, loud, intimidating thing if you're not prepared for it, so we try to bridge that gap and help them to understand that just because they're doing something new and different, doesn't mean that they need to be scared, that it's an absolutely normal thing to do. So we like to give them that experience before the actual experience," Storms said.

In the future, Storms said he hopes the program can be expanded to include visiting a classroom inside a school.

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