

Public Libraries Summer Reading Challenge

We have lift off! Libraries across Argyll and Bute are getting ready to launch children into orbit for an intergalactic adventure which will keep them reading throughout the school summer holidays.

This year's Summer Reading Challenge is called 'Space Hop', and is themed around the idea of space.

The challenge will enable children to boldly go to new worlds, to encourage them to discover the joy of reading and hopefully nurture a life-long love for reading and books.

It will be offered in all Argyll and Bute libraries, plus the volunteer-run libraries on Coll and Lismore, the Service Points on Islay and Colonsay and the library in Tiree High School.

The Summer Reading Challenge is an immensely popular and successful national reading initiative. Now in its twelfth year, it involves up to 750,000 children aged between four and 11 via the UK library network.

It is created and run by The Reading Agency, an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more, and is supported by children's publishers.

Each year the challenge to children is simple. They're encouraged to read six or more books of their choice during the holidays with collectable incentives and rewards, plus a certificate or medal for every child who completes it.

Children can sign up at their local library from June 26, and all materials are absolutely free.

The adventure starts in the library, where young Space Hoppers meet Finn, Jessie, Nabil and Safiya - the crew of the Ex Libris - as they embark on their mission to set up the first lunar library. Unless the dastardly Spacekatz lead them into the nearest black hole

An interactive Space Hop (www.spacehop.org.uk) website has also just launched, linking children with top authors and illustrators and giving them space to talk about their favourite books and to share reading ideas.

Once again this year there are also large print Summer Reading Challenge materials available for visually impaired children, thanks to the support of the RNIB National Library Service.

Also available in a variety of languages are 'family leaflets' which explain, for parents and carers, the benefits for children doing the Summer Reading Challenge. They also suggest ways of supporting children during the challenge, and provide joint reading ideas for the whole family during the summer.

Councillor Neil Mackay, Argyll and Bute's spokesperson for Arts, Culture, Leisure and Sport, said: "The Summer Reading Challenge is one of the largest creative reading opportunities available to children in the UK. It's a great way to keep youngsters entertained over the holidays, and we know from previous years that they really enjoy it.

"Equally importantly, we also know that children who take part end up reading more books and reading more widely than those who don't, with potentially life-changing results".

Some 725,000 children across the UK took part in last year's Summer Reading Challenge - a 5% increase on the previous year. 47,000 children signed up as new library members.

Space Hop coincides with the 350th anniversary of The Royal Society's scientific endeavours, and the 2010 BBC Year of Science.

For more info please ask at your local library or contact

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