



August 16, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL LIBRARY CARD SIGN-UP MONTH

(Panama City, Fla.) During the month of September, the Northwest Regional Library System (NWRLS) is joining with libraries nationwide for Library Card Sign-up Month to encourage parents, caregivers and students to obtain a free library card that will save them money while securing steps towards academic achievement and lifelong learning. Disney and Pixar's "Toy Story 4" characters Woody, Buzz Lightyear, and Bo Peep are Library Card Sign-up Month honorary chairs, helping to promote the value of a library card and bring attention to the many ways libraries and librarians transform lives and communities through education. *"Explore infinity and beyond at your library!"* Your library card is the best back-to-school resource out there!

Libraries play an important role in the education and development of children. Studies show that children who are read to in the home and use the library perform better in school and are more likely to continue to use the library as a source of lifetime learning. Early literacy classes spark a love of reading and learning at a young age to encourage school readiness. NWRLS branches also offer free STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) programs for school aged students. Select branches provide access to 3D printers, LEGOs, coding classes, and the ability to experience Virtual Reality through PlayStation VR or Oculus Rift headsets.

"Throughout the school year, our libraries offer a variety of programs to stimulate an interest in reading and learning," said Sarah Burris, Community Relations and Marketing Coordinator. "We have programs for all ages, from early literacy to continuing education. We teach technology skills, provide awesome children's classes, bring in guest speakers on various topics, and inspire creativity through craft programs. It's an exciting place to be!"

Libraries are an essential component of the educational system of any community and we are here to assist you this school year. All branches have Wi-Fi and computer access available for your research and homework needs. Your library card allows you to check out up to 20 items at a time with access to books, audiobooks, DVDs, ukuleles, dulcimers, Playaway eReaders, Little Sprouts education kits, cake pans, and telescopes. Through the Overdrive or Libby apps on your electronic device, you can download 5 eBooks or eAudiobooks at a time. You also have access to online research databases, including Encyclopedia Britannica and the Florida Electronic Library.

Your library card also allows you to create a free ArtistWorks for Libraries account. ArtistWorks provides unlimited access to beginning to advanced online music and art lessons. Music lessons include band

instruments, piano, ukulele, and more. This service has been generously sponsored by the Ukulele Orchestra of St. Andrews Gift of Music. For more information about ArtistWorks for Libraries, visit <http://www.nwrls.com/artistworks.html>.

NWRLS has branches in Panama City, Panama City Beach, Parker, Port St. Joe, Wewahitchka, Bristol and Hosford. Library cards are free to residents of Bay, Gulf, and Liberty counties and are valid at any library in the system. For more information about how to sign up for a library card, visit any NWRLS location in person, online at www.nwrls.com, or call 850-522-2100.

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Contact:

Sarah Burris, MLIS

Community Relations and Marketing Coordinator

Northwest Regional Library System

Bay County Public Library • 898 W 11th St • Panama City, FL 32401

(850) 522-2120 Office • (850) 522-2138 Fax

Email: sburris@nwrls.com • Website: www.nwrls.com

