

GOOD NEIGHBOR

Tracy Downs

Of the 25 public libraries on O'ahu, Tracy Downs has taken her three grandchildren to every single one of them — except the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. And the only reason she hasn't done that is because patrons must be registered with the Library of Congress National Library Service.

Downs, along with 9-year-old twins Zylee and Kalista, and 8-year-old Aria, are all avid readers. So, when Zylee suggested visiting every single library on the island, the other family members immediately embraced the idea.

"I feel happy (at the library) because it's fun ... when I get to pick my book!" says Aria whose current favorite is *The Best Hawaiian Style Mother Goose Ever!*

Zylee describes the library as a "calm place." Plus, it's where she can read about all types of animals from capybaras to quokkas. She and her family even traveled all the way to the smallest library on O'ahu, Waialua Public Library, to get a book on kangaroo rats.

While driving to these libraries, they pick out a random topic and implement it when they get to the library, Downs says, explaining they frequent the library about twice a month. The main ones are 'Ewa Beach, Wai'anāe, Kapolei and Salt Lake-Moanalua public libraries.

"Reading is just part of our life, like every day, even in the car," says Downs, whose grandchildren are participating in this year's Summer



Tracy Downs (second from right) poses in front of Wai'anāe Public Library with her granddaughters (from left) Kalista, Aria and Zylee. PHOTO COURTESY TRACY DOWNS

Reading Challenge.

The girls even created a book nook at home with new library books, deciding the order of who will read what.

Downs continues to take her grandchildren to the library to promote "health, knowledge, finding a peaceful, quiet environment for homework or readings ... just a healthy atmosphere."

Kalista encourages more people to pick up a book, saying, "It's so you can get more literacy and curriculum into your brain (and) to get more knowledge."

"It's fun and easy to do," Zylee adds, "and you don't have to pay for anything."

There are many activities offered at each library location, from Big Kids Story Time to crafting stations and even scavenger hunts. Aria especially loves the self-check-out feature.

Plus, every day of the week, there is a library open somewhere.

"There's so much for par-

ents to keep the children interested in frequenting the libraries. There's so many different pluses at each library," Downs says.

The librarians are another reason the family keeps returning.

"We want to praise them and thank them ... We want to just encourage them to share their kindness because it keeps the children wanting to come back for more," Downs says.

The family is especially appreciative of librarian Kelly Stinefelt of Wai'anāe Public Library, and librarians Kylee Munro and Ruth Pukahi of Waikīkī-Kapahulu Public Library, for making the library a welcome place.

"There's no end to reading," Downs says. "All your life you will always appreciate and learn from reading. It will always be it never ends. You'll never get bored in a library."

Join the summer reading challenge at librarieshawaii.org/summerreading.

—Allyson Pang

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