

## SpecialConnect: Support for Families with Special Needs



*All smiles for the ribbon-cutting at the SpecialConnect launch on January 31, 2015 (L to R): Glenda Williams, LBPL Director; Sara Myers, LBPLF Exec. Director; Jane Netherton, LB Community Foundation (LBCF) Board President; Marcelle Epley (and son Wesley), LBCF CEO; Dr. Nancy Kimber, Donor; Barbara Egyud, former LBPLF Grantwriter; Nancy Young, LBPLF Director of Dev.; Diane Jacobus, LBPLF Advisory Board Member/Donor; and Lance Adams, LBPLF Board President.*

The Library and Foundation launched a new program early this year called **SpecialConnect**, a service that offers programs and resources designed for children with special needs and their caregivers. Funded by a grant from the Knight Foundation, and individual gifts from Advisory Board Director Diane Jacobus, her daughter Dr. Nancy Kimber, a local obstetrician, and former City Manager James Hankla, the SpecialConnect program will be particularly beneficial for children with varying challenges, especially those with autism spectrum disorders.

Both the Library and Foundation are committed to providing equal access and a welcoming and friendly environment appropriate for all abilities so that everyone can reach their highest potential. The SpecialConnect area is located in the north west section of Main Library's Children's Department, and offers toys, sensory bins, a privacy cube, and nearly 200 books. Additional services include specialized iPad apps, multi-sensory story times and movies, and partnerships with key organizations serving children with disabilities.

The program encourages families to read together. The books have their own collection code in the Library's online catalog and are easily identified on the shelf by puzzle piece stickers on the spine. The collection features fiction and nonfiction titles for both parents and children, as well as some books in Spanish. Patrons can enter the keywords "books for families" or "autism" online to quickly find appropriate books to fit their needs. Many are free to download on home devices through the App Store.

The multi-sensory story time offered once a month at Main Library is interactive and encourages children to engage

all five senses through reading, using sign language, singing songs and moving about. During a sensory film program the lights and volume are set low, and families may bring snacks for special dietary needs. Children may enter and exit during the movie at their comfort. For more information, please call the Main Library's Youth Services Department at (562) 570-7500 during open hours or visit the Library's website: [www.lbpl.org](http://www.lbpl.org).

### SpecialConnect's goals are to:

- (1) Strengthen lifelong learning, social development, and self-esteem so that all children will succeed in school and daily life;
- (2) Empower caregivers with the tools and library resources they need to help children learn and succeed;
- (3) Support families by connecting them with their peers.



*Pictured L to R: Commissioners Jonathan Schnack and Vivian J. Malauulu, (Commission on Youth and Children); Josephine Caron, LBPL Community Services Department Librarian; Citizens Advisory Commission on Disabilities (CACoD) Chair Deaka McClain and CACoD Commissioner Sidney Valdespino.*