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Toy libraries in parliament

On 18 May 2021 TLASA chairperson, Dr Monica Stach, presented at Parliament's public hearings on the Children’s Amendment Bill [B18 - 2021]. The meeting, hosted by the Portfolio committee on Social Development, took place the Zoom platform and was livestreamed on Parliament’s YouTube channel.

Monica’s presentation covered the importance of quality, play-based, early learning and the value that toy libraries bring to the ECD landscape in South Africa. Toy libraries in various communities provide play resources, training and play spaces that ensure high quality ECD services.

Toy libraries can also speed up the process of universal ECD coverage across the country. By adding a toy library in every community, various ECD services can have access to resources, making it a cost-effective and efficient way to set up ECD service delivery in new areas.

Well done for taking toy libraries to the next level!
Arcadia's toy library for seniors

TLASA recently welcomed our first member toy library for seniors! Although toy libraries that cater for the elderly are common in other parts of the world, they are few and far between in SA. One old age home that wants to set the standard for active aging, is Arcadia Home for the Aged in Greytown, KZN.

The idea of a toy library was first introduced to Arcadia in 2018 by the local occupational therapist (OT) who ran weekly groups with residents at the Home. Therapy groups included various activities, and once a month it was time for games. Residents loved having the chance to play some of their favourite childhood games like Ludo again, and were surprised to learn the vast variety of games available now. Learning to play new games not only gave residents a sense of achievement, but also brought out a previously hidden competitive side in some. The idea was to continue the play outside of the OT group setting, giving birth to the toy library.

Arcadia's toy library is located in the Home’s book library and consists of a locked cupboard where games are kept and large tables where games can be played. Games can also be borrowed by residents to play at their own leisure wherever they choose to do so.

During play, residents have the opportunity to interact with each other in a way that regular day-to-day interaction does not allow. They make jokes, debate about who will win and tease each other. Playing games gives them the opportunity to do something for fun, especially to those with mobility challenges for whom leaving the Home has become difficult.

While some games are just for fun, others have been specifically chosen and included in the toy library by the OT to stimulate and maintain certain cognitive skills.

In 2020, when Covid struck, Arcadia, as most other old age homes, was put in total lockdown and no visitors were allowed. This was devastating to some residents, but their toy library provided some much needed fun.

*(All photos shared with written consent)* (Continues on next page)
Lockdown meant a sudden change in the residents’ weekly routines. No one was allowed into the Home to offer activities or run groups. This is when Lihle, the Home’s social worker took charge and started organising group play sessions using the games from their toy library. She had been involved in the OT groups and had often co-facilitated games groups.

Tom, one of Arcadia’s residents, says the games provide entertainment and stimulation to them while also keeping them safe during these uncertain times.

For more information on Arcadia and their toy library, you can visit their website (www.arcadia-home.co.za) or contact them on 033 417 1528.

TLASA challenges old age homes around the country to consider adding a toy library to the services you offer your residents. Research shows that participation in meaningful activities leads to improved emotional and physical well-being and quality of life. This is especially meaningful in the times of Covid, as leisure activities serve as a buffer to life’s stressful events, leading to improved overall health. There is also a positive relationship between social leisure and perceived mental health, making group activities like board and card games ideal.

What should we include?

TLASA suggests including the following games when starting a toy library for seniors (or adding a service for seniors to your toy library).

1. Deck of cards - and printed instructions with various games to play
2. Word & number games - e.g. Scrabble, Boggle, Rummikub
3. Games for groups - e.g. Pictionary, 30 Seconds, Charades (timed games could be adapted to allow more time for seniors to respond)
4. Individual activities - e.g. Colouring, Sudoku, Crosswords, Puzzles
5. Traditional games - e.g Checkers, Chess, Backgammon, Morabaraba

As your service grows, you can expand to include an even bigger variety.
A message from ITLA

Dear Toy Librarians,

The ITLA board honors the work you do as a toy librarian. Your passion for play and serving communities through your toy library programs should be saluted and applauded.

ITLA celebrated World Play Day and International Toy Librarian Day on May 28, 2021. We adapted this poem and want to share it with you to remind you that...

TOY LIBRARIANSHIP IS ABOUT MORE...*

More than toys.
More than books and blocks and puppet shows and wooden trains...
It’s about relationships inspired by play.
Nurtured and inspired by the toy librarian.
The relationship between parent and child;
The relationships children form with one another.
The relationship toy librarians form with their members
in a safe, imaginative and playful toy library environment.
It’s about relationships built among toy librarians, parents, caregivers, teachers, practitioners, and community members working together
to create a nurturing and playful community for all children to grow.
The Toy Library is about potential and opportunity.
It’s about more than children.
It’s about helping adults help children have fun, grow and learn.
It’s about building solid foundations for children through play.

We look forward to our next online webinar, scheduled for July 21, 2021. Be on the lookout for the invitation to register.

Please do keep safe amid the many challenges the Covid-19 pandemic continues to present. Also, encourage your toy library members to stay safe by observing the appropriate protocols, which include washing hands regularly, social distancing, and wearing masks.

Warm regards,

Dr. Monica Stach
ITLA President

*ADAPTED BY CAPE COD TOY LIBRARY FROM PITTSBURGH TOY LIBRARY, AND ADAPTED AGAIN BY ITLA, MAY 2021
World Play Day 2021: Play is healthy

After being forced to play at home due to Covid last year, toy libraries, schools, and other organisations came out in full force to celebrate World Play Day this year. We proudly share some highlights from the day with you.

South African Statistics

We received WPD celebration data from 7 organisations around the country, and present it to you below. We do, however, know that more than these organisations did host activities on WPD. If you would still like to share yours with us, go to www.tlasa.org/wpd

- 3406 children
- 222 adults
- 26 people with disabilities

The next few pages will show you what World Play Day looked like around the country.

Organisations featured:
- Cotlands
- LETCEE
- Penreach
- Roots to Wings Boutique Preschool
- Slovo Centre of Excellence
- Uzwelo Home
- KwaMbonambi Library
World Play Day 2021

[Images of children playing and having fun during World Play Day 2021.]
World Play Day 2021
World Play Day 2021
World Play Day 2021
While some TLASA committee members attended ITLA’s online play session, others were able to participate in active play on World Play Day. TLASA partnered with one of our members, Cotlands’ Mkhondo Toy Library, to celebrate WPD at Uzwelo Home. This children’s home houses 46 children between the ages of 2 and 19 years old, with the majority of children being teenagers.

The older children took part in a Minute-to-win-it tournament facilitated by the TLASA team. They initially loved the competitive nature of the games, but as they became more invested in the play, winning became less of a goal and we just played to have fun. For the younger children we organised a jumping castle and the Cotlands team used the toys from their toy library to provide free play opportunities.

Staff from the Home soon joined in the fun and said that they had forgotten the value of play both for themselves and for the children. Subsequently they have organised in-service training for the caregivers on the value of play.

We loved the day at Uzwelo Home and we are proud that our WPD celebrations have lead to a more continued focus on play for the children!
Upcoming events

13 July 2021: TLASA AGM (14:00-15:30)
• Invitation and Agenda have been emailed to all members
• New constitution to be voted in at AGM
• New TLASA Committee to be voted for at AGM
• RSVP - Confirm attendance or Nominate a proxy now: www.tlasa.org/agt

30 September 2021: TLASA Newsletter

12-13 October 2021: National Toy Library Conference
• Will take place online again
• More details to follow

Visit our website
When last did you visit tlasa.org? Our members-only page has been updated and you will find interesting documents and links there. The documents referred to in our webinars are also loaded there. Happy browsing!

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