

Early Learning Lab on Tour, Comes to San Juan Island Thursday, Sept. 11



I love hearing about all the entertainers on tour this summer. There is Beyoncé, Bruce Springsteen, and Billy Joel, just to name a few. Even the immortal Cher is back on the touring circuit with fellow 80s icon Cyndi Lauper. Count yourselves lucky if you get to see that special spectacle.

Let's face it, summer concert tours are a big part of our American pop culture. They get us excited about the days ahead, off our lounge chairs and on our feet to celebrate. In some cases, they are a chance for us to reconnect with favorite performers from years past. Yes, I'm a certifiable Cyndi Lauper fan.

As an enthusiast of these traveling shows, imagine my excitement when I heard that an Early Learning Lab was on tour this summer with stops in our region, and that the promoters of the tour wanted to visit San Juan Island. I jumped at the opportunity to reserve a date.

Okay...maybe an "early learning lab tour" doesn't quite prick your ears up the way...let's say, hearing that the dashing Justin Timberlake is coming to town. But for those of us working in education and library youth services, the topic of early learning is among the hottest themes for children ages birth to five.

In fact, I hope the news of the Early Learning Lab coming to San Juan Island will draw huge crowds of cheering fans. Unlike one night of splashy entertainment, early learning is not fleeting. It sets the stage for a child's future and is recognized by educators as critical for children to reach their full academic potential.

Additional research points to the first five years of life as being the most active for human brain development. During these years, children are more receptive to learning. As a result of these findings more states are advocating for high quality, early learning initiatives. Here in Washington, the advocacy team includes a private/public partnership of educators, librarians, lawmakers, philanthropists, and business executives.

The Early Learning Lab, also known more casually as The UNI, is sponsored by Thrive by Five Washington/Foundation for Early Learning. It contains more than 30 interactive activities for kiddos to promote literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) based learning. The Lab is designed specifically to target children birth to five and promote the important roles of parents and primary caregivers as a child's first and most valuable teachers.

Thrive by Five launched the Early Learning Lab in 2013 as a statewide outreach initiative. That first year, the Early Learning Lab team traveled over 2,574 miles with an estimated 1,500 children participating in the project. The 2014 tour includes stops to 15 locations throughout Washington with a visit to San Juan Island on Thursday, Sept. 11 with drop-in hours from 10 AM to 2 PM.

The Lab will be held outdoors at the Family Resource Center, 476 Market Street, next to the Food Bank and across from Marketplace. There is no registration and the activities are free and open to the public. Caregivers, parents, educators, and of course children are encouraged to attend.

For more information about the Early Learning Lab coming to San Juan Island, please call the library at 378-2798 or visit the library's website at www.sjlib.org

Melina Lagios

Assistant Director/Youth Services

San Juan Island Library www.sjlib.org

360.378.2798