

Media Release

For Immediate Release:

Come for immunizations, head home with a book EPL and AHS put books and early literacy information into the hands of newborns and their parents through expansion of EPL's Welcome Baby program

EDMONTON, AB, June 19, 2014 – The Edmonton Public Library (EPL) is reaching outside library walls to the city's youngest citizens with the help of Alberta Health Services (AHS).

EPL's Welcome Baby program is now offered at all nine AHS public health centres in Edmonton. Families taking their children for two-month immunizations receive a package that includes a book bag, board book, CD, early literacy resources and an invitation to get a free library card. Children under 24 months also receive a board book at library branches when they sign up for a library card.

More than 90 per cent of two-month-old children are immunized every year at local public health centres.

"A library card, books and storytime are the first steps to a love of reading," said Linda Cook, CEO of EPL. "Our goal is to reach the 15,000 babies born in the Edmonton region each year, and ensure they have equal access to the resources and tools necessary for success later in life."

The expansion of the Welcome Baby program follows a pilot project launched last fall at the Mill Woods, Northeast and Woodcroft public health centres. The pilot project, with support from AHS, saw library volunteers deliver approximately 1,700 early literacy packages to local families in six months.

"We know that literacy impacts health and well-being, so we're very happy to be working with the Edmonton Public Library to connect families with materials that support language and literacy development," said Delmarie Sadoway, Executive Director of Primary Care and Chronic Disease Management at AHS. "A baby's first immunizations are a perfect time to provide materials that foster a healthy learning environment, right from the start."

The growth of early literacy education is an ongoing priority for EPL, as it impacts all Edmontonians.

"We know the first three years of life are the most crucial for brain development, and for future learning and success. Knowledge of the alphabet upon entry to Kindergarten is a strong predictor of reading ability in high school. Children who start behind in school typically stay behind," said Tamsin Shute, Youth Services Librarian at EPL. "The Welcome Baby program gives tools and support to families to help them engage in positive and fun interactions in the home that will support babies'

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healthy development and growth.”

The expansion of the Welcome Baby program has been made possible due to ongoing donations to the library. The program, which will cost an estimated \$1.5 million over five years, is one of two Centennial fundraising projects on which EPL is focused. For more information, visit epl.ca/welcomebaby.

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About the Edmonton Public Library

The Edmonton Public Library (EPL) is proud to be [2014 Library of the Year!](#) From March 2013 to March 2014, EPL celebrated 100 years of service to our great city. We've come a long way since 1913 when books were all you could find on our shelves... and we're just getting started! Today, EPL carries everything you care about. We are Edmonton's largest lender of all manner of information and entertainment. Our professionally trained staff take you beyond Google with the knowledge, discernment and desire to help you navigate a universe of information. The second most visited place in Edmonton, every year we host over 14 million in-branch and online visits across our 17 branches and website. We deliver our incredible content to you everywhere – in the library, at home or on your handheld device. Unmatched access and unrivalled value – that is today's EPL. EPL is a registered charity and relies on donations to enhance services. Spread the words. www.epl.ca/donate.

About Alberta Health Services

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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