



June 5-9, 2024
It's A Barnyard Mardi Gras
35th District Agricultural Association



Youth Literacy Partnership Program Returns for a Third Year **Empowering children to read and helping create a** **foundation to foster a love of reading**

One of the main focuses at the Merced County Fair is the children in the Merced County community. As such, the Merced County Fair continues to partner with Valley Children's Healthcare, the Merced County Library and First 5 Merced County on the **Early Childhood Literacy Partnership** whose mission is to empower children to read, as well as foster a love for reading. For the third year in a row, the Merced County Fair will host the Library Bookmobile on **Saturday, June 8 and Sunday, June 9**. Children at the fair will be able to pick a free book and get their own [Merced County Library](#) card. A great way to provide resources to encourage reading this summer. **New this year**, local authors will visit the fair for special story readings on Saturday and Sunday.

"The partnership with Valley Children's and the creation of this literacy partnership has been wonderful and enables us to further engage and serve the community during our annual Fair. To see the excitement on the faces of these kids when they are handed a new book – it's magical. It was like a light switched on and we hope that light will continue to shine bright and encourage their skills in reading, which truly opens doors."

- **Teresa Burrola, Fair CEO**

Since 2022, a total of 1,750 books have been given out – and it is anticipated that more than 1,500 books will be given out at the 2024 Merced County Fair. There have also been 125 families who signed up for library cards – directly supporting continued reading.

The importance of reading is more apparent than ever as fall testing revealed that across the entire Merced County School District over 80% of students are reading below grade level. (Source: <https://mercedcountytimes.com/fall-testing-for-students-reveals-data-thats-sobering/>)

"By fostering a love of reading at a young age, we are giving our children one of the greatest gifts and an enormous addition to their toolbox that will serve them throughout their lives! We must encourage reading, provide the opportunity for reading and this partnership does just that."

- **Amy Boese, Merced County Deputy Librarian**

Valley Children's Healthcare has served Merced County families since the hospital opened in 1952. In addition, Valley Children's has pediatric specialists who live and work in the region, providing care at Olivewood Specialty Care Center and Olivewood Pediatrics in Merced, and at their neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) located in Mercy Medical Center.

In addition to this partnership, the Merced County Public Library has developed a summer reading program, "Read, Renew, Repeat," which will run June 1 - August 3, 2024 with a variety of activities to encourage reading among youth. This is in addition to its established Read & Succeed Program, eBooks and of course, traditional hard copy books available for check out.