

# EAST BAY DAILY NEWS

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 2006

Volume 1.1

## Groups rally to stamp out illiteracy

### Training workshops for families to get under way

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A host of agencies around Berkeley and Albany are gearing up for a major literacy effort later this month.

The Los-Altos based Hoopoe Books Share Literacy program — which provides books and literacy materials to disadvantaged children, families and teachers — will begin conducting training workshops Aug. 21. Its literary partners include six institutions in Berkeley and Alameda County that will explore specific stories intended to develop higher-level thinking in both children and adults. Presented in English and Spanish, the stories will be presented at the Berkeley Even Start Program by program coordinator Martha Martinez.

Even Start serves 30 non-English speaking immigrant Hispanic families, many of which are not proficient in either English or their native language, Martinez said.

“One of the program’s components is to outreach

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Doug Oakley / Daily News

## ILLITERACY

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to parents and support them in getting literate, not only for the child but for themselves,” she said.

Share Literacy’s approach includes a home literacy kit and a CD with suggested activities such as reading with your child or suggesting the child help with a grocery list, according to Sally Mallam, the director of the program run nationally through Hoopoe Books.

“Many of these children do not have books in the home and regular bedtime stories don’t happen,” she said. “It tells them how easy it is to go to the library and get books for nothing.”

Mallam said the stories themselves, which have been used in this program for 30 years, provide analogies that help children relate.

“They see themselves in the characters,” she said. “These stories are highly contextual. It gives them an understanding since they may be nervous of things that are new to them.”

That approach is one reason Pamm Shaw, the executive director of the Berkeley-Albany YMCA, is glad it’s being used in its early childhood services. She said it should work well with the population of 500 children it serves, 55 percent of whom are just learning English as a second language.

“We’re kind of a unique program because we have parents who are post-docs at (UC) Berkeley and parents who just came over the border who have third-grade education levels,” Shaw said. “So with that range of families, this is the perfect program: it doesn’t look down on parents with high literacy skills and for our parents who need lit-

eracy support, it helps them use the materials and not be embarrassed in front of their kids.”

The effort, funded by a \$90,000 grant from the Kaiser Permanente Community Grants Program, is directed toward more than 3,700 disadvantaged youngsters in the Bay Area. Presentations include the use of finger puppets that will be sewn from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 12 at the Los Altos Public Library.

Sally Mallam,  
Share Literacy program director

Along with the Berkeley workshops, others will continue in San Francisco beginning Aug. 22. One participant there is Mercy Housing California, which serves 8,000 children across the state. Mercy is piloting the program in 30 of its affordable housing properties, said the director of resident services.

“We had been looking for a program that would be able to engage our youth that was culturally appropriate and engaged them in some life skills training,” she said.

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**STORY TIME** — Lisa Baranco-Smith reads to youngsters at the Berkeley Albany YMCA in Berkeley Tuesday. The YMCA is participating in the Share Literacy program, a program that provides books and literacy materials to disadvantaged children.