

\$20k donation keeps Oakland arts program afloat

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Siblings Pharaoh and Egypt paint with watercolors at MLK Jr. Branch Public Library in Oakland.

It's 3 p.m. at the Martin Luther King Jr. Branch Public Library in Oakland and Antonia Moller is helping a young girl pick out colors for a collage. Moller, an art teacher, is here for their Library Education and Art Program (LEAP), through which kids can drop in to play with art supplies for two hours each week, free of charge.

Venus, age 9, and her sister Abril, 5, came to the library with their mother, Gabriela Garduño, to collage with colored paper, stickers, paints and glitter. Egypt and her brother Pharaoh, both age 3, are busy painting with purple and blue watercolors and giggling with their aunt, Sauda Burch. The two families have come to the library today to participate in the program run by the Museum of Children's Arts (MOCHA). Moller said she loves that LEAP brings art teachers into public spaces in Oakland. "It's nice to get to know the communities," she said.

Though LEAP began in 2010, serving over 20,000 Oakland families at public library branches throughout Oakland, San Leandro, Alameda and other cities, it was canceled earlier this year when funding provided by state and federal agencies was terminated. In September, the program was reinstated when MOCHA received a \$20,000 private donation from Art.com, an online retailer of art prints headquartered in Emeryville. These funds will allow LEAP to continue for the 2017-2018 school year.

MOCHA has received funding from state and federal sources such as the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and grants from the city of Oakland to support their free arts education programming. In addition to LEAP, MOCHA offers free programs in over 30 public schools during the school year, as well as free playgroups through the Oakland Parks and Recreation Department program "Sandboxes to Empowerment," offered at Rainbow Recreation Center, Carmen Flores Recreation Center, and Mosswood Park. The funding goes to providing wages to teaching artists, the purchase of art supplies, coordination with sites, marketing and other expenses.