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Howard County Library System
HCLS Launches Beanstack
New Early Literacy Service for Children Now Available Online

ELLCOTT CITY, MD -- Howard County Library System (HCLS) now offers customers access to **Beanstack**, an online portal that provides free personalized recommendations of children's books and educational apps. The new, online service is free to all customers with a HCLS library card. Customers can sign up at **hclibrary.beanstack.org** and use **Beanstack** from their home computer, mobile device, or in any of the Library's six branch locations.

Beanstack is an innovative new way to connect children and their families with books and educational apps that match each child's specific age, interests, reading level, and background. The service, which is powered by children's curation company Zoobean, provides access to a database with over 1,600 unique tags that works in tandem with preferences entered in the child's individual profile.

Once a child's profile is created in **Beanstack**, customers receive weekly emails that include a book recommendation, a selection of educational classes of interest at HCLS and a learning guide containing helpful tips, background information, and activities to encourage engagement and critical thinking. To help customers save time, a direct link to the recommended book within HCLS' catalog is also provided in the weekly email. By clicking on the link customers can check the availability of the book and request to pick it up at the most convenient HCLS branch location.

In addition to email, recommendations are also available to families anytime via the online profile. The service also features personalized book lists, a reading log, and a reading incentive program that enables a child to earn badges based on the numbers of books read. Recommended educational apps are available for a cost via iTunes and GooglePlay.

Beanstack is offered and managed by Zoobean, Inc., which uses a proprietary search engine combining the expertise of human curators, who are themselves instructors and educators, with data science to provide personalized recommendations to every child.

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