

7-1-2019

## Georgia Library Spotlight - Oconee County Library

Rebecca Ballard

*Oconee County Library*, [rballard@athenslibrary.org](mailto:rballard@athenslibrary.org)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ballard, R. (2019). Georgia Library Spotlight - Oconee County Library. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 56(3). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol56/iss3/5>

This Columns is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Library Quarterly by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu).

# GLA SPOTLIGHT

## Oconee County Library

Music is always in the air at the Oconee County Library in Watkinsville, Georgia!

Oconee County Library's Children's Specialist Rebecca Ballard offers a variety of music-related programming, but she is especially excited about the library's ukuleles. Ballard and

her friend and former co-worker Natalie Wright started a region-wide circulating collection of ukuleles. The ukes have been immensely popular with patrons of all ages for the last several years throughout the

Athens Regional Library System. Patrons love being able to check out a ukulele to try it out without having to spend a lot of money to invest in a musical instrument. Patrons can check out a ukulele, complete with case and chord book, for two weeks.

Ballard also teaches a regular series of free ukulele classes for children called Sunshine Strummers, a six-week class for children ages 6 to 11. Both kids and parents are surprised and delighted to discover that the children will have learned how to play a song before the first class is over. During this past year's Libraries Rock summer reading program, Ballard also taught a free ukulele workshop for adults.

Baby Music Jam and Family Music Jam are also extremely popular music programs at the

Oconee County Library. Ballard fills a room with a variety of percussion and string instruments, and children of all ages and their families play instruments in a group sing-along while Ballard leads them with her ukulele. Other music-related programs available at the Oconee County Library include Music Therapy, Kids' Karaoke & Open Mic, and other various dances and concerts for children.



Ballard thinks that including music in library programming is an extremely important part of the library's mission because music is a great literacy tool. Music is a multisensory experience that helps children memorize information. Extremely complex mathematical or science concepts, or even basic skills such as the alphabet, the names of the planets, or the names of the 50 states and capitals are much more easily learned when they are set to music and sung as a song. In fact, in the book *Fundamentals of Children's Services*, published in 2013, Sullivan emphasized that "studies show that people who practice or are exposed to music have better word recall and verbal memory, and babies exposed to music learn faster than their peers." Repeated experiences strengthen brain synaptic connections, and

repeated musical experiences imprint on a child's memory.

Singing along with music also increases children's vocabulary. The Association for Library Service to Children (ASLC) has shown in studies that by the time children from low-income families reach the age of four, they will have heard 30 million fewer words than their more advantaged peers. So, the ASLC encourages playful ways like singing to share words with babies. Like the library books families might check out, songs regularly use

words that are unfamiliar to a child, and encountering new words in a song increases a child's vocabulary.

The Oconee County Library has welcomed ever-increasing crowds of patrons to its musical library programming. If you would like more information on any of these programs, please contact Rebecca Ballard at [rballard@athenslibrary.org](mailto:rballard@athenslibrary.org). You can learn more about the Oconee County Library at the website at <http://www.athenslibrary.org/oconee>.