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Sports Equipment Lending & *Play Down Your Fines* For Children Launched at Isaías González-Soto Branch Library in Buffalo.

Pilot Program Funded by Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library today announced a new program designed to encourage children to exercise both their bodies and their minds by borrowing sports equipment from the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library located at 280 Porter Avenue on Buffalo's lower West Side.

Funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, the sports equipment share offers youth size soccer and lacrosse kits for a borrowing period of up to three days. A *Play Down Your Fines* program was also unveiled for children under the age of 17 who have fines/fees on their library card. When the sports equipment is borrowed, all fines and fees are removed so children can again take advantage of full library services without the burden of owing money.

"We are so pleased to partner with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation on such an exciting pilot program. Combining exercise and reading makes good sense as both practices have been shown to greatly improve one's overall health and can empower youth for a lifetime of success. Now, you can get both free, right here at the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library, which was selected because it serves such a diverse and vibrant community and it is located in a park -Prospect Park," said Library System Director Mary Jean Jakubowski. "We could not have launched this new initiative if it were not for our partners from *Project Play Western New York*. We also look for assistance from the Hispanic Heritage Council, The Belle Center and other neighborhood groups in an effort to spread the word and get kids out and about to exercise their bodies and minds."

Project Play Western New York is an initiative driven and funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's Youth Sports & Recreation focus area in partnership with the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and the Aspen Institute Sport & Society Program.

In the winter months snowshoe kits will replace soccer balls and lacrosse kits. This program is currently only available at the Isaías González-Soto Branch Library however anyone with a Buffalo & Erie County Public Library card can borrow the equipment or take advantage of *Play Down Your Fines* at that library. The Library also has a new and growing collection of children's books on sports, athletes, team building, soccer and lacrosse available for borrowing.

Free programs focusing on soccer and lacrosse skills, team building, coaching and empowerment are being offered at the González-Soto Branch Library throughout the year by the local not-for-profit Algonquin Sports for Kids. Details can be found here: <https://buffalolib.libcal.com/calendar/events/?t=d&q=sports&cid=8851&cal=8851&cm=5216>

For more information on the sports equipment lending program or *Play Down Your Fines* for children under 17 years of age, visit the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library website at: www.BuffaloLib.org or call 716-858-8900.

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Buffalo & Erie County Public Library

For over 180 years, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, (B&ECPL), has provided reading materials, services and expertise to the residents of Erie County, New York. The Library System, comprised of 37 libraries and the Library on Wheels bookmobile, welcomed over 2.86 million visitors in 2018. Today's libraries are vibrant public spaces that encourage the joy of reading, discovery and lifelong learning. While literacy remains at the core of its mission, the B&ECPL is always expanding services to support the changing needs of our diversely populated region by providing a focused approach to assisting individuals, families, schools and businesses. Fostering the development of a literate and informed citizenry, Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries offer Wi-Fi, public computers and printers, downloadable books and music, makerspace DIY and interactive activities, author talks, book clubs, story hours, teen themed events, summer/winter reading initiatives, holistic medicine lectures, genealogy training, rare book exhibits and much more. For more information visit: www.BuffaloLib.org.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. The Foundation has a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires on January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit: www.rcwjrf.org.

Project Play Western New York

Project Play Western New York envisions a community in which all children have the opportunity to be active through sports. Every child—regardless of location, income or ability—should have access to fun and fulfilling physical activities that build confidence and set them on a path for lifelong success. For more information visit: <https://www.projectplaywny.org/>.

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Tags:

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