



Let The Good Times Roll  
June 4-8, 2025  
35th District Agricultural Association



## Merced County Fair Expands Early Childhood Literacy Program

Exciting new features include the Reading Zone, Local Leaders Read campaign and the Fair's own Little Library – all to mark the Program's 4<sup>th</sup> Year

The Merced County Fair is proud to announce the **return and expansion** of its **Early Childhood Literacy Partnership Program**, a collaborative initiative with **Valley Children's Healthcare**, the **Merced County Library**, and **First 5 Merced County**. Now in its fourth year, the program continues its mission to **empower children to read** and lay the foundation for a lifelong love of reading – and in 2025, it's growing in exciting new ways.

**New this year**, Fairgoers can experience the **Reading Zone**, a cozy and engaging space located in the new **Farm to Fair attraction** along the **Sunshine Lane Family Area**. This interactive area will feature **daily story times**, **comfortable seating for families** and **hands-on activities** to spark young imaginations in a fun, farm-themed environment. Children will also be invited to fill out a **"Thank a Farmer" postcard**, which will be mailed to a local farmer – a perfect tie-in to the Merced County Library's Summer Reading theme.

Another exciting addition is the **Local Leaders Read** campaign, where **elected officials, first responders and educators** will read their favorite children's books aloud to young Fairgoers in the Reading Zone. This daily event, held from **6 p.m. to 7 p.m.**, reinforces the message that reading is valued at every level of the community. Children 12 and under who attend will receive **special prizes** as part of the fun.

"Adding the Reading Zone was a natural next step for us," said Teresa Burrola, CEO of the Merced County Fair. "We want reading to feel joyful and accessible, especially for children who may not have books at home. To see their faces light up when they get a new book or hear a story read aloud – that's where real magic happens."

The **Merced County Library Bookmobile** will return for a fourth year on **Saturday, June 7** and **Sunday, June 8**, offering free books to children and the opportunity to sign up for their own [Merced County Library](#) card, if they don't have one already – a key to a world of discovery. Since 2023, more than **1,750 books** have been distributed and **125 families** have signed up for library cards at the Fair. This year, it is anticipated that over **1,500 additional books** will be given away.

In a county where more than 80% of students are currently reading below grade level (Source: [Merced County Times](#)), these efforts couldn't be more timely or impactful. "By fostering a love of reading at a young age, we are giving our children one of the greatest tools for lifelong success," said Amy Boese, Deputy Librarian for Merced County. "This program is about access, encouragement and showing kids that reading can be fun."

To extend the impact of this initiative beyond the Fair, the Merced County Fair will install its first-ever **Merced County Fair Little Library** – a permanent, free book exchange located outside the Fair Administration Office on Martin Luther King Jr. Way. This year-round resource will allow local families and visitors to take or leave books at any time, keeping the love of reading alive in the community long after Fair week ends.



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The Fair's literacy initiative also complements the Merced County Library's **"Level Up at Your Library" Summer Reading Program**, which runs **May 31 – August 2, 2025**. This program offers a variety of activities, reading incentives and events to keep young minds active and engaged throughout the summer. For more information, visit: [www.countyofmerced.com/3977/Summer-Reading-2025-Level-Up-at-Your-Lib](http://www.countyofmerced.com/3977/Summer-Reading-2025-Level-Up-at-Your-Lib)

Valley Children's Healthcare, a key program partner, continues to support youth development through its regional pediatric services and outreach programs. The hospital has served Merced County families since 1952 and provides specialty care at Olivewood Pediatrics, Olivewood Specialty Care Center and in the NICU at Mercy Medical Center.