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# Toy Loan Program News

## Featured Toy Loan Staff member: Alex Ruiz



Most of you know Alex, our Medium Truck Driver, very well. In fact, most people think that Alex is the President and C.E.O. of Toy Loan since he has been here so long. He enjoys his job so much that he has been with the Toy Loan Program for over 17 years! Dedicated to all the children that he serves, Alex can be seen driving all over the county, from San Pedro Toy Loan in the South Bay to Pearblossom Park in Antelope Valley and then to Prototypes in Pomona, with a big smile on his face. When he's not busy delivering toys all over L.A., Alex enjoys spending time with his family, collecting coins, playing hand ball and fishing. He even told me he wants to strike it rich by gold-panning. Who knows, maybe one day he will own Toy Loan! As you can see, it never hurts to be friendly... especially with a future millionaire. So don't be shy and say, "Hi" to Alex next time he stops by your center.

## Featured Toy Loan Center:



## El Cariso Park

The little leaguer swung the bat and all I heard was a loud CRACK! as the ball went flying into the outfield. The baseball diamond seemed almost lonely as the boys practiced their pitching and batting at El Cariso Park in Sylmar. Most of the children were inside the recreation center checking toys out from Blair, the Toyrarian. This was my first visit to the nether regions of "The Valley," but it was a pleasant one as the warm sun played on the treetops and the cool breeze raced the leaves. The other side of the parking lot was full of golf carts and retired folk getting ready for their arduous trek through yet another 18 holes. As I spoke with Blair, she told me that the kids that frequent her Toy Loan Center mostly enjoy the action figures and dolls. She said that those get checked out the

quickest. One little girl asked me if I was going to check out a toy and I quickly replied, "No thanks. I already have all the Sponge-Bob Square-Pants I can handle." She giggled as she continued to look through the different games trying to decide which one she wanted. El Cariso Park is very busy with many activities and their most popular is the swimming pool in the summertime. As this warm season gets closer and closer El Cariso Park will soon open the watering hole to the community, Blair will see more and more children and of course, they will continue to check-out toys to the kids.

## Best Practices

- Remember to clean the toys regularly before lending them back out to another child.
- Use only non-toxic cleaners around children for their safety.
- Avoid lending toys with small parts to children younger than 3 years.
- Carefully follow the age recommendations on the toy box.

## Children & Play

(Heading Outdoors)

Spring has sprung upon us and as the warm weather begins to awaken us from our winter hibernation, it makes us want to get out and have some fun. This is especially true with children. Warm weather and sunshine gives them a burst of energy and before you know it, they are ready to head back outdoors. There are many outdoor activities for children to partake in this beautiful season. Take the kids out for a nature walk in the park or woods so they can collect rocks or gravel to create beautiful mosaic pictures. (continued on Page 2)



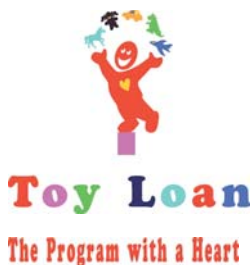
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Addressee:



## Heading Outdoors... (Continued)

All you'll need is cardboard, paint and glue for this fun filled creation. Have the children keep a log of their personal journey through nature. They can enjoy recording what they saw, heard, smelled and touched. You can try this same activity at your local beach, only in place of rocks and gravel, the children can collect beautiful shells. Get them involved in gardening by researching what plants and flowers harvest during spring. Allow each child to plant their own flower or plant and encourage daily monitoring and caring for their crop. Enjoy bird watching with the children by teaching them how to make bird feeders using a Frisbee, sugar water, and a wire hanger. You may also research communication between birds using books and audio, then provide the children with information on how to identify the different types of birds by their calling. Now is a wonderful time to encourage children to play. Playing can simultaneously be a great learning experience and fun filled. So, let's grab some sun block, put on our shorts and teach them how to have fun in the sun.



## Did you know?

- About 189 billion LEGO elements were molded between 1949 and 1997.
- There are 1,060 ways to put together three-8 stud bricks of the same color.
- 300 million children and adults all over the world play or have played with LEGO bricks.
- Every year, children spend almost 5,000,000,000 hours playing with LEGO bricks.
- In 1949 LEGO bricks were produced and sold only in Denmark.

## Special Reminder:

Monthly Reports are due on the first day of the month. Please contact Toy Loan Headquarters if you need additional copies or have questions.

<u>Upcoming Events</u>	
Parents' Place Information Fair & Festival	4/29/07
Volunteer of the Year Banquet	4/30/07
Para La Comunidad Health Fair	5/2/07
May TLAB Meeting	5/24/07
<b>We Want To Hear From You!</b> If you have suggestions on how to improve the program, best practices, recommendations for potential new Toy Loan centers, or any topics of interest for publication in this newsletter, please contact us at (213) 744-4344 or via email at <a href="mailto:toyloan@ladpss.org">toyloan@ladpss.org</a>	