

Library showcases coding, robotics classes for children



Theresa Rockett shows how Cubetto can move around a mat with bright squares at the Downtown Library in Boca Raton. (Marci Shatzman/Forum Publishing Group)



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Classes expand high-tech offerings in Boca

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Laura Sheffield demonstrated Sphero, the little round robot that could find its way out of a labyrinth taped on the floor.

"Each block tells the robot to do a different thing," Theresa Rockett said about Cubetto, a square robot waiting to navigate a mat with bright squares.

Both librarians were posted at stations in the Boca Raton Downtown Library meeting room June 9 to showcase the new children's coding and robotics classes offered over the summer for library members.

Five classes called Little Makers for ages 5 to 8 and two classes called Youth Makers for ages 12 to 17 will be taught now through July 27 in the Downtown Library's Discovery Studio.

Max LaMura, who runs the studio, came up with the classes after watching webinars, going to a show and seeing what other libraries were doing.

"We read reviews to make sure we got the best of the best," he said.

The library already has high-tech classes and this is an expansion, said Ann Nappa, library manager. All library courses are free, she added.

In fact, Connor Rodgers, 8, will be starting his third coding course with Lindy Harvey, the librarian who teaches the Code.org curriculum.

"Connor has taken 14 classes. He's one of my favorite students," she said.

His father is City Councilman Jeremy Rodgers, whose day job is an IBM computer engineer.

"Sometimes he shows me what he's doing," Connor said.

The rollout of the new Youth Services classes was thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the Friends of the Boca Raton Public Library, Nappa said. The Friends commit at least \$50,000 to the library each year and also help fund the Discovery Studio, according to Friends' president Cyndi Bloom.

The studio started with four computers and now has nine, said Oyuki Poletz, programming librarian, adding, "that will allow us to expand the amount of people we can reach. There's always a waiting list."

All the new classes are from 2 to 3 p.m. at the library, 400 NW Second Ave. Each class has about 15 students. Registration is required at <https://myboca.us/1047/Downtown-Library> or by calling 561-393-7852. The classes are for library members only.

- Cubetto, June 22, basic programming with a wooden robot
- Little Bits, June 29, create electronic inventions using magnetic building blocks

- Ozobot, July 6, learn the basics of algorithms with a smart robot
- Finch Robot, July 13, basic computer science using the Snap! Block coding program
- Sphero, July 20, coding and robotics using app-enabled robot
- Hummingbird Robotics, July 27, create and program robots using the Snap! Drag and drop program

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