

# Curl up — on a good book

■ The children's section at the Pleasanton library is the first beneficiary of the inspiration of Lindsay Olofson, 11, and her dad

By Katie Oyan  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Kids at Pleasanton Public Library are stomping on their new books. They're climbing over them and jumping off them, too.

But that's the idea behind the books in "storyland," the new hangout in the children's section.

Created by upholsterer Erik Olofson, storyland has a royal blue padded mat for a floor and giant vinyl books for seats and pillows. Olofson's 11-year-old daughter came up with the idea. And it's such a hit, it's leading them toward a new family business.

Throughout the day — especially after preschool storytelling — youngsters in the Pleasanton library can be spotted crawling around the storyland mat, climbing over the benches or using the big flat-pillow-books as a trampoline.

Some even do a little reading.

"This is a fun book area, because before they just had pillows," said 5-year-old Nichole Maria Cui as she climbed over a lavender and light blue "Hansel and Gretel" book-bench after an afternoon story hour. When she's not climbing over the benches, Nichole likes to check out "the 'Arthur' kind of books."

The old stomping ground, "story mountain," was a pile of rectangular cushions and pillows that were wearing out and leaking foam.

"You couldn't replace one part without disassembling the whole thing," said Olofson, who has run his own upholstery business for 20 years. "I wanted to design something that would be easily repairable."

At the library's request, Olofson drafted a plan for new seats and tables.

Then he showed it to his family.

"My youngest said, 'That's really neat, Dad, but it's really boring. Why don't you make it look like big books?'" Olofson said. "The light bulb went on in my head, and I said, 'That is a great idea.'"



NORBERT VON DER GROEBENTIMES

**ERIK OLOFSON** of Livermore holds a model of the Pleasanton library's "storyland." Olofson has started the Big Cozy Book Company and will offer similar designs to libraries in the state.

He took his daughter Lindsay's suggestion and had a blast.

"If I had done it the original way, I wouldn't have been charged up about it," Olofson said. "I have a major creative urge that this is helping to fulfill."

Building storyland was easy, he said. Designing it was the tricky part.

"You want all the books to be the right height, the right size for kids and adults," he said.

Also, with the inevitable jumping and climbing, he decided not to go much taller than "table height" with the taller books, which stand on each end of the benches.

"You don't want a jungle gym in the library," he said.

Now that he's overcome the book-furniture challenges — like tracking down "bus-yellow vinyl" — Olofson is going into business.

He started the Big Cozy Book Company and hopes to start selling similar storylands to libraries throughout the state.

"I just found out I can actually patent it," he said. "I'm tickled about that."

With more help from his family, Olofson would like to come up with different designs and expand his selection. For instance, they're working on a hangout for teens with big books shaped into booths. Olofson also is hoping customers come to him with their own ideas.

"I'm totally open to designs and sizes," he said.

For now Olofson is taking his time with the new company, "expanding nice and easy." But eventually, he would like to get out of his old business and concentrate on the Big Cozy Book Company.

"It's gratifying," he said. "Much more than I would have expected."