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Library promotes disaster readiness

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Inside the bright and sunny children's section of the Middle Country Public Library yesterday, a gray paper cloud on a bulletin board hung ominously over three tiny figures, and a sign asked, "Would you be ready if a catastrophe struck?"

A Red Cross "go-bag" sat in a glass case along with portable meals and emergency supplies, and a stack of fliers recommended that children put together disaster kits with favorite books, toys and a stuffed animal to see

them through scary times.

With a \$50,000 grant from the Allstate Foundation, the library at 101 Eastwood Blvd. in Centereach planned to unveil today a catastrophe readiness clearinghouse for children and adults called "Readiness Begins With Me."

Sandy Feinberg, the library's director, said, "This way, the kids engage their parents and [it] gets them ready. Parents get embarrassed if their kids ask them why they're not ready for a catastrophe."

The displays at the library, along with a Web site and planned lectures and work-

shops, are intended to educate people on how to anticipate disasters, with a strong emphasis on planning ahead.

Whether out of anxiety or denial, people tend to avoid preparing a good disaster plan, said state Sen. John Flanagan (R-East Northport), who sits on the State Senate's committee on Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. He pointed to the library's role in gently introducing the topic to people. "There are all kinds of people coming in there every day. And if you're in a place where it's staring you in the face, you can't avoid it."