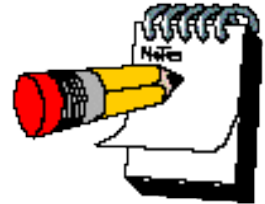


## A Note from your Director

It's hard to believe it's Fall! I hope everyone had a good summer and a little vacation time (even though it was hot and dry). Due to many personal matters, such as a fractured ankle, we are late with our scheduled September issue. This will still be our "September Book Notes", however, and as always, Pat Roberts and Ron Stimson have done a wonderful job.



Although the Gatesville group had a summer break during July, the volunteers continued to record at the Plane facility in Dayton. Thank you, Wynona Montgomery of Baytown, for gathering enough volunteers to meet the request at Plane.

I also want to personally thank Dalayna Perales and Ruby Russo for their work as Team Leaders for Mt. View. They will be stepping down as Dalayna has a new little baby girl and will be very busy with her daughters. Congratulations, Dalayna! I have been told that Dalayna and her mother Ruby, longtime supporters of WSP, will continue to volunteer, however.

As many of you agree, WSP has the most wonderful group of volunteers! It's a privilege for me to have an opportunity to know you. It would take an entire issue of Book Notes to thank everyone for volunteering and coming to the rescue when help was needed at the last minute. Please read Pat Yeargain's article regarding Mt. View, and also see the thanks to Dugie and Lydia for their help at Hilltop.

Wishing you a cool Fall, and please continue to respond to those SOS's from Dugie.

*Judith*

### Who Me . . . Worry?

By Pat Yeargain

My dear friend, Betsy McCraine, and I are the new WSP leaders at the Mt. View unit. We were thrilled to be asked and jumped at the chance. After meeting with Judith and receiving excellent mentoring from Angela, we were ready to "lead."

Betsy took the first month in August, and I volunteered to tape and enjoyed myself greatly as always. My only leadership was to drive and help with the addressing of the envelopes. Betsy did a terrific job and Angela helped smooth the way.

When Betsy let me know she couldn't go in September, I said, "No problem – I can do it!" As my role is to handle all the email communica-

tions, I was ready to go with nice lists, emails and approval; all "i's" dotted and "t's" crossed.

Interesting how life works for all of us, isn't it? At the last moment, a 99 year old mother of a volunteer became ill and another lifetime friend was dying, and of necessity, I was short two volunteers.

Shaking off a temporary shiver, "No problem", I thought. We will be fine with three volunteers and me. I hoped my need to leave early enough for a Longhorn game wouldn't be a problem. I printed my lists, readied my cell phone, gassed up my car and headed to bed. Instead of sleeping, little worries kept floating by –

- "One of the volunteers is new, what if she forgets her DL?"

*(continued on page 3—Who Me?)*



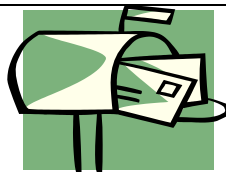
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**Want to make a tax free contribution?**  
**Go to: [www.storybookproject.org](http://www.storybookproject.org)**  
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**c/o Austin Community Foundation**  
**P.O. Box 5159 Austin, TX 78763**  
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**Making Connections**



A powerful, well written letter from a  
 grandmother's grateful heart

*Dear Mrs. Dullnig,*

*My grandchildren, who I have custody of while their mother is incarcerated in the Hilltop Unit in Gatesville, TX, received books and tapes provided by your organization.*

*The children were thrilled with the package and its contents. The two older recipients took their books/tapes and held them close in their arms and just sat with them for quite some time before they were ready to listen to the tapes. The younger child listened to her tape three times in a row and put them where they would be close to her while she slept. Reading together is a very intimate activity and the personalization in the tapes really touched the children and provided them much appreciated closeness with their mother who they miss terribly.*

*Your program is unique in that it gives the children a tangible loving thought from mothers who cannot be with their children. The children, no matter what their mother's circumstances, and no matter what mistakes the parents made, love them regardless and need to know that their mothers love them because they don't have the day to day reassurances of a normal relationship. The books fulfill not only the moment's pleasure of receiving the unexpected present but each time the tape is heard or the book read it is a tangible reminder of their mother's love for them.*

*Thank you for this meaningful service of helping the children of incarcerated mothers refresh and strengthen the bond that is so vital to them both. I wish I could have sent you the look on the children's faces when they saw the books and their mother's handwriting on the tapes. It had been quite a while since they were "with" their mother and just the moment of connection you gave them meant a great deal to them, and to me.*

*Thank you again from these children who have had to cope with more than the average child and for giving their mother the opportunity for just a small gesture that so many mothers get to take for granted...giving their children an unexpected gift telling them that they love them.*

*Appreciatively, LS*

*(continued from page 1—Who Me?)*

- “What if they don’t let us in with all the tapes we need to bring in?”
- “This might be a new group of mothers and they will need some extra assistance.”
- “One of the volunteers is new, will she need extra help?”
- “What if I say the wrong things to the ladies and confuse them?”
- “What will I do if someone’s name isn’t on the list?”
- “What if my underwire triggers the wandy thingy and they don’t let me in?”

... and on and on, little worries kept leaping through my mind.

Next morning, confidence a bit shaken, I headed to the pick up spot and gathered two volunteers but the third was missing. After frantic phone calls to everyone involved behind the scenes (Dugie, Felicia, and Judith), the volunteer remained missing.

“Oh no,” said the Woodman group. “Will we have to cancel?” “No, we can do this,” I thought. Off we went, a bit late because my greatest fear would be leaving someone behind.

Driving to Gatesville assured me that the two volunteers and I could do the job, and we would make it work. Our new volunteer, Jayne, rode up in the car with me, and right away I knew she would be an awesome volunteer. She was quick to pick up what to do and didn’t even flinch through the thorough pat downs we received.

Arriving at Mt. View, Jayne, Kim (a wonderfully calm, seasoned volunteer) and I, set up the chairs, and I tried to quiet my fears of saying the wrong thing or forgetting to say the right thing.

When the ladies arrived, we had an introduction time, and I was mightily relieved to find out that they were not a new group but, instead, having their last session. I told them the time constraints we were under and let them know that we would need their help to get all the tapes completed. I even forewarned them that we might not have time for an ending circle.

“Ok,” they said. “We can get it done!”

Our sweet mentor volunteered to help oversee the addressing of the envelopes, and I thought, “Well, why not? She is a very capable person and I will check everything over at home later.”

Before I could freak out, we were finished! We had time for an ending circle and I had time to express my gratitude to the ladies for getting their books, getting to a room, reading beautifully, and getting it done!

Driving home, I had a chance to debrief with Jayne and Kim about the important lesson I’d learned that day. Storybook volunteers, mentors and participants want to tape the books. They want it to be a success, and so it was! All my stewing and worrying had been for naught just as any of you would have told me!

Even though you didn’t give voice to it that day, the next time you see me you can rightly say, “I told you so!”



## What's Happening?

- October 7-8, **Lydia Hewett** attended the **First UMC Southwest Texas Conference** in Corpus Christi and provided WSP information to attendees.
- Under the leadership of **Julia Taylor**, Women’s Storybook Project will have a **booth at the Texas Book Festival** on the grounds of the state capital in Austin on October 22 and 23. This is an opportunity to inform the community about WSP.
- The **Grant Application Committee** (Pat Yeargain, Susan Pintchovski, Kim Weidmann and Judith Dullnig) will meet October 28 at the UT Regional Foundation Library.
- **Ellie Chaikind and JoAnn Innerarity**, Team Leaders, **will begin to implement WSP at the Henley unit in Dayton.** Plane/Henley has the largest female facility in Texas with 2,900 offenders.
- **Barnes and Noble Holiday Book Drives** begin in November.



## Volunteer Spotlight

### Brenda Dykes

Brenda Dykes: teacher, principal, caregiver, volunteer extraordinaire...what a valuable asset WSP has in this caring person!

Brenda, a third generation Texan, has been married 48 years to the love of her life, Norman. They have two grown children, Sherry and Billy, who live close to them in Baytown. Additional blessings include their two grandchildren, Dylan (who is a freshman at University of Houston) and Kaitlyn, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader. Brenda is the caregiver for Norman and his 96 year old father. Since becoming a caregiver, she struggles to stay involved, but Storybook is one organization she refuses to give up.

A Texas Tech graduate, Brenda went on to earn her Master's Degree from Texas A&M at Commerce. She has devoted her life to education, giving 24 years in the classroom and 13 more as an administrator. She was at Travis Elementary in Baytown for 21 of those years. When she retired in 2004, her staff presented her with a plaque that summed up how they felt about her: "Time is not measured by the years that you live, but by the deeds that you do and the joys that you give."

Highly active in worthwhile organizations throughout her life, Brenda was president of two noteworthy organizations: Pilot Club (women organizing projects in their town) and BARSEA, a retired teachers' organization. It was at a retired teachers meeting when Joan Martin presented a program about WSP that Brenda was "hooked" on helping.

It certainly wasn't out of character for her to step up to volunteer! She is a career volunteer for many organizations, including the Alz-



heimer's Walk, Educational Foundation, Baytown Foundation, and Relay for Life. At her church, Memorial Baptist, she is Chairman of both the Mission house and Explorers (a daily pre-school ministry). She has taught Sunday school, and is active in Kids Beach Club, an after school Christian group, once a week. In her "spare time" (really?) she enjoys crosswords, Sudoku, and reading non-fiction books.

She lives her life guided by a simple quote which her mother needle pointed for her years ago: "Today is the first day of the rest of my life." With admirable goals of helping others, Brenda spends each new day involved with many worthy causes, including spreading the word about Storybook and soliciting book donations. She and her husband support scholarships at Lee College, United Way, and Relay for Life. Since WSP started in the Dayton area, she has been involved either by going to the prison to record offenders or now as the supply person - sorting, boxing, and delivering books, which more readily accommodates her caregiver position.

Brenda's feelings about Storybook echo the thoughts of many volunteers. "There is nothing so special than to see the joy on the faces of moms and to hear in their voices the excitement of connecting once again with their children. A mom's love is a strong bond that can make the difference."

Thanks, Brenda, for your dedication to making bonds between mothers and their children!



On June 23, Judith received the Partners in Caring Award for Women's Storybook Project from the Tanner Foundation "in acknowledgment and appreciation of determination to maintain the precious bond between mother and child during the most difficult of times". This included a \$5,000 donation and recognition at the Donacaster Annual Convention.



## Notes from Dugie

We started using VolunteerSpot (VS) as our primary way to sign up for our Gatesville prison visits in August. About 50% of all our volunteers have logged on to VS at one time or another. I hope you have found it to be easy to use. Try it at: [www.volunteerspot.com](http://www.volunteerspot.com)

However, anytime that you have difficulty with the website, you may sign up with me using email [dugiegraham1950@gmail.com](mailto:dugiegraham1950@gmail.com) or, if you are unable to use VS, please call me at 512-306-0788. In December, remember to look for our next "season" for sign up to come to you through an invitation from VolunteerSpot.



- **Nancy Wallace** for giving a WSP presentation to the Sun City Kiwanis Club meeting in Georgetown.
- **Mary Lou Batlan**, for taking poster and fliers to the Southwest Texas Annual Conference of United Methodist congregations and **sending information regarding** the upcoming Conference in Corpus Christi to volunteers.
- **Pat Yeargain** and **Betsy McCraine** for becoming the new Team Leaders at Mt. View.
- **Lydia Hewett** for attending the First UMC Southwest Texas Conference United Methodist Women on October 7-8 and providing information about WSP to attendees. Lydia was at a table with brochures and letters about Women's Storybook Project.
- **Dugie Graham** and **Lydia Hewett** for coming to the rescue with tapes needed for Hilltop. Great teamwork!
- **JoAn Martin** for continuing to recruit new volunteers for the Plane/Henley in Dayton.
- **Julia Taylor** for organizing the booth and scheduling volunteers for the Women's Storybook Project table at the Texas Book Festival.
- **Wanda Stimson** and **Laurie Benavides** for organizing a book drive at Grace Episcopal Church and Preschool in Georgetown.
- **Mona Carver** for helping recruit new volunteers from Temple Beth Shalom.
- **Pat Yeargain** and **Betsy McCraine** for hosting a luncheon for St. Matthew's Episcopal Church for current and prospective volunteers.
- **Woodlands Christian Academy** for sending books.
- **Judy Fox** for representing WSP at a Social Action Skills training on September 11 at Temple Emanu El in Houston.
- **Hannah's Sisters Circle of Leesburg United Methodist Women's Unit in Leesburg, Virginia**, for sending books and donations in response to Linda Cox's article in Response Magazine.



## Can you help?

- A volunteer is really needed to help organize the Barnes and Noble Arboretum Book Drive.
- Someone to help develop a partnership plan with other organizations/churches that might have vans we could use on a WSP Saturday.
- Volunteers who will share their observations, feelings, stories, or thoughts from their WSP experiences for the newsletter. Here's your chance to share those wonderful experiences! Please email them to Pat Roberts at [patsrob@swbell.net](mailto:patsrob@swbell.net) and put Storybook Experience in the subject line.
- A volunteer who would develop an outreach program to organizations, schools, and churches in order to make them aware about Storybook and how they can help.

## WSP First Open House

WSP had its first open house at the new downtown office at 700 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Austin on Sunday, June 5. Approximately 35 volunteers stopped by throughout the afternoon to enjoy a tour of our wonderful new location. We now have ample office space including wall space to display our growing collection of awards as well as a storage room for supplies right next door. Refreshments and fellowship were enjoyed by all who attended. **(see pictures on cover)**



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Ron Stimson, Dugie Graham, Wanda Stimson, Deacon Laurie Benavides, David Graham, Judy Fox



Judy Fox, Marty Barrick, Pat Roberts, and Paula Jameson share Storybook tales while enjoying refreshments.



David Snyder, Pat Yeargain, Nancy Snyder, Shirley Dyer, Dugie Graham, Jeri Saper, Paul Saper, David Graham

**OPEN HOUSE !**  
**See page 5 inside**