Dear WSP Volunteers and Supporters,

We’re moving forward, adding volunteers and units, and I want to thank each and every one of you for your many contributions!

The editor of Book Notes, Pat Roberts (who does a fabulous job!), has requested that I make my message short. I’ve entitled it “From Facts to Feelings.”

Facts:
- In 2013, we mailed 2,517 books and recordings.
- We will introduce and implement our program in a 7th unit, San Saba in the near future.
- We’ve begun fundraising and corporate sponsorship. A big thank you to Rhoda Silverberg and Yeti Coolers! (See article on page 2.)

Feelings:
- Linda West, a mother of one of our “alums,” is expected to give an emotional testimonial about WSP at an Open Book Party this fall.
- We received a most moving letter from a mother who adopted a child whose birth mother is in our program. (See “Making Connections.”)
- WSP also received from a dad an emotional letter that says it all: “They [the children] both sat together and listened to every word that their mother read. I left them alone to sit and enjoy the words from their mother. I believe this time was their time to spend with their mother. My son is 10 he had to leave the room he got choked up. I think both of them wanted to cry. The thing about it is I think I also wanted to before they did. I was filled with joy for my children.”

We are making a difference! Have a great summer!

Jennifer

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WSP Open Book Parties
A New Trend in Spreading the Word

Storybook Program is an “open book,” appealing to anyone with a heart for children and a love of books. It is receptive to support from any and all individuals, organizations, and businesses. Almost without fail, when people find out about this innovative concept, they want to participate.

Hosting a WSP Open Book Party is a great way to get the word out to your friends, family, and (continued on page 3—Open Book)

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Increasing Female Inmate Population

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the female inmate population in the United States increased 10.9% (up 10,000 inmates) between midyear 2010 and 2013, while the male population declined 4.2% (down 27,500 inmates). This surge in female offenders requires additional units being opened.

At this time, WSP is active in six TDCJ units: (continued on page 4—Population)
Challenged but Determined
By Cynthia Winer
Co-Leader, Lane Murray

Two days before our scheduled Storybook session, I was contacted by Katrina Ackerman, the Wyndham School district’s administrative assistant for Lane Murray. Katrina informed me that Crystal would be participating as one of the mothers at the upcoming session. Crystal has four children and wanted to read to each of them. She’s in the special education class at Lane Murray and doesn’t read very well—but this hurdle was not going to prevent her from letting her children hear her voice.

Crystal had already selected four books and had been practicing with her teacher the month before. She was determined to read to her children. When she arrived for Storybook, books in hand, we assigned her to a volunteer to read all of her books, one after another. After completing her project, four tapes and four books in hand, she excitedly came to the table to address her envelopes and get them processed for mailing.

At Lane Murray we allow the women to write the approved address on the envelope, so the child receives the book in the mother’s own handwriting. Crystal asked me to address her envelope, explaining, “I’m illiterate.” She had just read four books! Crystal may have challenges in reading, but she certainly is not illiterate!

Next we picked out four more books to practice with her teacher, so she can read to her children again in June. This mother is determined to have her children hear her voice and perhaps demonstrate to them the importance of reading. In our car on the way home, the volunteers talked about Crystal and how brave she is to face the challenge of reading in order to connect with her kids.

As volunteers, we know we’ll interact with moms who want to create or maintain a connection with their children. We know we’re doing something really special to help them read and record a book and send a short message to their children. What we don’t always anticipate is some of the special women we’ll meet along the way.

I am so thankful to have had this opportunity to build new bridges where old ones had been burned. What it has meant to my child and me could never be expressed adequately in words. -BP
acquaintances. It's simple...you decide what type of gathering to host (a light luncheon, wine and cheese party, a taco breakfast gathering, BBQ, or whatever you want to do!), choose a date and time, and invite around 50 people for an expected turnout of around 20. With the help of Judith and/or other experienced volunteers, you then share the Storybook Documentary, talk about what the program means to the children, their mothers, caregivers, and the volunteers...and then invite participation from your guests. They may want to offer financial support, participate as a volunteer, or spread the word by hosting an Open Book Party for their friends.

Two Open Book Parties have been held. The first one was hosted by Dugie and David Graham last fall, and more recently, Rhoda Silverburg and Patricia Newton co-hosted an intimate party at Rhoda’s home. (See photo above.) Both were successful and their hosts reported great interest from the guests. Consider hosting a WSP Open Book Party and help get the word out! 😊

Two mothers explain in their own words how WSP has made a difference in the lives of their children while they are incarcerated.

I would like to thank the Storybook organization for helping me connect with my child personally as well as education wise. It helped express to my child that even though I am not with her, I don’t love her any less. Her dad loves the fact that I am in this program and he says that it makes her pick up and read books all over the house! He has wrote 3 support letters to show his appreciation. Thank you for this program. - AM

This project has been a huge blessing to me and my children. I don’t talk on the phone as some can afford to do and my children are six hours away. So I am able through this project to stay in contact more certainly and personally. I am able through this project to teach my children the importance of understanding and enlighten them through the stories I read them. I am very grateful and full of excitement about the positive effects this project has had and will have. -AL

- Brenda Keillor and husband, Pete, who continue to work toward moving Storybook into the 21st century by training volunteers in the necessary process of burning CDs. Pete has been industriously seeking alternative methods for burning CDs (even building a prototype!) that would be more cost effective and time saving. Soon, we hope to have CD recordings in all facilities.

- To the generous anonymous donor who donated $5,000 to support connecting children with their incarcerated mothers.

- Pan American Club of Austin for your generous support.

- Ladies of Charity Lake Travis for their generous donation to WSP.

- Offender Cindy at Lane Murray who has diligently mentored the Storybook Program at the Lane Murray Unit for the past ten years, putting out books, arranging supplies and guiding the mothers to the recording stations. She was awarded a certificate in recognition of her dedication.

- St. Edward’s University’s interns, Diamond and Alexis, for your help with the time consuming and tedious task of sorting and packing the donated books received by WSP. Also, Kim Weidman for creating the wonderful booklet that explains the guidelines for the sorting process to the students.
The filmmaking crew which followed Storybook around from recording the offenders to the children's homes is creating a **five minute mini-documentary.** It will serve as a marketing piece for WSP and be used for press releases, fundraisers, presentations, and grant applications. Its encapsulated nature will make it perfect for drawing people in when time is limited for a presentation.

A new **Development Committee** has been formed, chaired by Rhoda Silverburg. Its purpose is to encourage volunteers to host Open Book parties, to market to schools and churches, and to develop relationships with corporations. As you can read in articles in this publication, they are off to a great start, with two Open Book Parties and our first corporate sponsor, Yeti Coolers!

Kealing Middle School Magnet Program's eighth grade English students, under the direction of their teacher, Frank Webster, found a very creative way to support WSP with a community service project. They created works of art inspired by great pieces of literature and then held a silent auction to generate a generous donation of over $500 for Storybook!

**Amplify Austin** is a one day meaningful communal fundraiser to help bridge the needs and services of nonprofit organizations in the Austin area. During Amplify Austin, $3,298.00 was donated to WSP, and over $5.7 million dollars was raised in total!

The Texas Episcopalian magazine, “Diolog,” has published a fabulous article written by Carol Barnwell, Editor, about WSP. The article, entitled “**Mother and Child Reunion:** Recording Program Benefits Incarcerated and Children” is being mailed to all Episcopalians in the Diocese of Texas. Watch for the June issue on their website at www.epicenter.org.

**Barnes and Noble** donated an amazing 1,756 books to WSP following the Holiday Book Drive at the end of 2013. Thank you to all the Storybook volunteers who donated their time to stand at the doors and encourage donations. WSP continues to appreciate B&N's ongoing support and the support of their patrons. Their enthusiastic dedication to WSP shows in the photo below!

(Henley State Jail, Lane Murray Prison, Hilltop prison, Woodman State Jail, Plane State Jail, and Mountain View prison. Last August, the warden at the San Saba transfer unit in San Saba contacted Judith Dullnig requesting WSP at that facility. After observing the program at Mt. View, Chaplain Taylor and his wife, Debra, with the approval of Warden Tracy Allen, decided to begin gathering volunteers for Storybook at San Saba. Pat Yeargain and Betsy McCraine have graciously offered to help implement the program there. This unit will begin its Storybook program in the near future with CDs, making Women’s Storybook Project operating in seven out of the ten TDCJ female units targeted for the program.

Future WSP expansions will include the Crain Unit (formerly known as the Gatesville Unit) in Gatesville as well as the William P. Hobby and the Marlin Transfer units in Marlin. In order to do this, WSP needs to increase its resources, so please consider hosting an Open Book Party! 😊)
Pat Yeargain has been a resident of Austin since 1965, with a ten year Hiatus in Arizona. She has been married to her best friend, Bob, for almost 48 years. They have a daughter, Jennifer, who lives in Austin with three of Pat’s grandsons. Their son, Scott, lives in Sugarland with the other three grandsons. Yes, that makes six grandsons and they are the loves of Pat and Bob’s lives!

Pat was born in Houston, but came to UT and earned a BS in Elementary Education. Her husband’s work took them to the Phoenix area where Pat taught 4th and 5th grade until 1984. Then they moved back to Austin and she began teaching in Leander ISD for close to 20 years. She has completed some graduate work at Texas State University, where she has also been a mentor teacher and coordinator of a novice teacher induction program. Currently, she is employed by Texas State as a grant specialist and coordinator of an accelerated, graduate-level teacher certification program.

When Pat’s busy schedule permits, she loves traveling with her husband, spending time with the six grandsons, reading, knitting, and working on outreach programs. This year, she volunteered in a former co-worker’s 3rd grade classroom and enjoyed reconnecting with the children.

Pat says Maya Angelou said it best for her: “My mission in life is not merely to survive but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.” She says she’s working on the style, but from what this editor sees, she has that nailed!

Pat has been involved in Storybook since 2006 when her dear friend, Susan Pintchovski, invited her to a gathering at Sylvia Fitz’s home. She immediately signed up, trained, and went to Hilltop in the pouring rain with Pat Roberts and Lynne Riley. She was hooked! She continued volunteering whenever she could at Hilltop, Lane Murray, and Mt. View. Embracing Storybook’s needs, she presented it to her church, St. Matthew’s Episcopal, as a new Outreach Program. It was accepted and they continue to support WSP financially. Pat’s contributions to WSP have been many. As well as being a co-team leader, she’s brought a team of St. Matthew’s volunteers on board, hosted presentations about WSP, and at holiday time her book club always donates several beautiful children’s books.

Pat is truly a blessing to Storybook, giving her time in many ways. As she says, “WSP has blessed me beyond measure in so many ways. I have tried to bring caring, compassion, and a smile to the ladies at Mt. View every month and have always taken home much more than I gave. I have enjoyed meeting all the WSP volunteers and have had lots of opportunities to get to know them and hear their stories while driving to Gatesville. My old brown Suburban Gatesville bus has made many trips and hopefully will make many more! Lastly, the most important blessing for me is the knowledge that sweet children somewhere are getting to hear their mother’s voice and remember her and know that she loves them in whatever way she can. If I can have even the teeniest part in that, I am indeed a lucky woman!” Pat Yeargain, Storybook is lucky to have YOU! 😊

I read to my 12 year old daughter. I got such relief reading to her. Like we still had some type of connection which made her open up and write to me. To be able to hear my voice when her little hands are tied cuz she can’t visit when she wants, and she can’t call because she is too young to do any of it. We were able to connect thru this. I loved it and she did, too. - CM
Making Connections

The thank you letter below from an adoptive mother is another wonderful example of how Storybook makes powerful connections!

I just wanted to take a moment to write and say “thank you” for the work that you do. My son was adopted out of foster care at 17 months old, and has not seen his birth mother since he was taken into State’s custody at 2 months old. I recently began writing to his birth mother when I located her in Gatesville, and I had no idea what to expect. I was so surprised and thrilled when I received a package for my son that contained the book "Guess How Much I Love You" and the CD of his birth mother’s voice reading to him.

I have no idea what the future will hold. My son’s birth mother may never be able to overcome her addictions or heal to the point where she can have a healthy, ongoing relationship with him, but as of today my son will be able to hear the voice of his first mommy telling him that he “is more loved than he will ever know.” For that, I am forever thankful.

The work that you and your volunteers put into this amazing project touches the hearts of so many people, and I wanted you to know that it doesn’t go unnoticed. Thank you for giving my son the chance to have a connection to his first mom that he might not otherwise have had.

Calling All Volunteer Talents and Stories

What are your talents, hobbies, and gifts? Do you have pictures of things you have created that you would like to share? What stories do you have about your experiences as a volunteer? Send information about these things to Sun Connor at info@storybookproject.org for use on WSP’s Facebook page! Also, please remember to LIKE Women’s Storybook Project on Facebook!

Appropriate License Plate

If you see this creative license plate around town, you will know Judith Dullnig, the WSP director, is behind the wheel! Kudos to her husband, Jon, for a creative, meaningful Christmas gift!

Electronic Book Notes Delivered to Your Inbox!

Would you, or anyone else you know of, like to receive Book Notes electronically? You can choose to receive your copy electronically, as a hard copy, or both. Contact Sun Connor at info@storybookproject.org if you would like to receive the electronic mailing.

The Storybook Project has brought my child and myself closer, the foundation that has been laid is AWESOME. My grandmother has expressed how the joy in my child’s eyes glows with the sound of my voice. Thank you for the building blocks of Love between my child, my grandmother, and myself. -AK
Helping Hands
By Betsy McCraine and Pat Yeagain
Co-leaders of Mt. View

It takes many caring and hard-working hands to make Women’s Storybook Project successful. One set of those hands would belong to our friend, Fran, at the Lakeway Post Office.
When we drop off about 50 large envelopes each month, she makes sure they are quickly processed. The children who are eagerly waiting beside the mailboxes will not be disappointed.
The incarcerated mothers often ask, “When will my children receive their books and CDs?” We can reassure them that with Fran’s help, they will arrive quickly and safely. Our thanks go out to Fran, our helping hands! 😊

A Team Leader’s Diary
By Pat Roberts; Hilltop Co-Team Leader

I thought I would share the process team leaders use to prepare for each month’s Storybook visit. Not all leaders prepare identically, but most are fairly similar.

Monday: Today, it is time to contact the prison with the names and license numbers of the volunteers who will travel to Hilltop with me this coming Saturday. Thanks to Dugie Graham, I have the list of volunteers she has gathered from Volunteer Spot. Using the data on the spreadsheet provided to all team leaders, I gather the license numbers and names and send them to Connie McMurray who will check each volunteer’s eligibility. If I have new supplies to bring in (thanks to Lydia Hewett!), I include those in the email as well. I send this information to Warden Nelson who approves our requests with a return email, which I print out.

Tuesday: I need to solidify any transportation arrangements needed for the volunteers, including renting a van (arranged by my co-leader, Lynne Riley) if necessary. Also, the driver(s) for all vehicles are determined.

Wednesday: I send out emails to all the volunteers to remind them of their commitment to the children on Saturday this week, including information regarding the location(s) and time for our rendezvous.

Thursday:
Hopefully today I will receive the faxed list of children’s names and address approved by Mr. Hill at the prison.

Friday:
Today, I double check the names and addresses Mr. Hill sent to me for any changes from last month. Those changes are then made on my computer file of address labels and printed out. I pack up my “traveling” cart with my folder, the address labels, and huge Zip Lock bags.

Saturday:
I load my supplies and cart, meet my wonderful volunteers at 9:15 in Liberty Hill, and relax and enjoy the company as we travel to Gatesville. There more camaraderie is enjoyed at the “Chez Shell” as we join the Lane Murray team and eat lunch together.
After lunch, we arrive at Hilltop and scramble out of the car while prison authorities check the engine, passenger compartment and trunk. Then we are allowed to drive to the entrance of the facility. I present the drivers’ licenses of all volunteers to the tower where they are cross checked against the warden’s approved list. Any supplies we have brought are checked by officers. We proceed to the security room where we are personally scanned. Once released, we are off to do what the entire week has been about! After opening circle (mothers updates us on their children’s reactions to receiving books), we record the incarcerated mothers as they read to their children! My job is simple: man the book room, assist the mothers in packaging and addressing their precious packages, and guiding the closing circle.
Our team stops at Dairy Queen to share stories about the day. We are all aglow!

Monday:
My husband, Steve, assists me by sealing the mailers. Then it’s off to the Leander Post Office where Jim greets us with a big smile and helps us get those priceless packages mailed. Later, I will get my team leader report off to Dugie, giving her the number of books, offenders, volunteers, and the cost for postage, gas, and vehicle rental. Another very gratifying month for me! 😊
Tell tale signs of Storybook recipients:

- They sleep with their book.
- Their eyes light up when the mail arrives.
- They take books to Show and Tell at school.
- They recognize Mommy’s voice.
- They engage with the book as it is being read.
- They say, “My mommy touched this book!”

Their SMILES!