



December, 2007 Issue Number 3

Our mission - to connect children with their incarcerated mothers through literature

A Note from your Director

Women's Storybook Project is making its Fall Debut! You'll be reading about the Texas Book Festival, the Barnes and Noble Book Drives, an article in Texas Library Journal and the 12th National Conference on Adult and Juvenile Offenders, which I attended in Maryland, in this third edition of Book Notes.

As I talked about Storybook with criminal justice people from around the country, some had heard about the storybook concept and others were eager to learn more. How exciting! I was even offered a position by a Corrections Official from the state of Maine, who was quite impressed with our program. I declined, but did offer consultation assistance during my summers in Maine.

Thank you WSP volunteers for making this program such a success in Texas! Everyone has made a significant contribution to this fine cause. This simple idea does, indeed, have a big impact on the community through the objective of decreasing recidivism.

We continue with our plan of bringing the project to another facility in the Gatesville area in 2008. You should already have the latest Sign-Up Schedule for early 2008. We will need all of your help to get the new facility going.



Here's my new TDCJ Woodman Jail hat (purchased at Pruett's!) Isn't it GREAT? Now I just have to buy ones for Hilltop and Lane Murray!

Many thanks,

Judith

A "Hearts and Flowers" Warden

Nancy Botkin

Interview: part one



Retired Warden Nancy Bot-

Retired Warden Nancy Botkin left the prison system three years ago, but still speaks passionately about her 24 years working inside the razor wires of the Gatesville Prisons. Initially, she was a correctional officer, then a sergeant, then worked in classification and social services, and ultimately spent the last nine years as senior warden, first at Hilltop and her final year at Lane Murray. Her staff affectionately teased her for being

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WSP at the Texas Book Festival

On November 3rd and 4th, the Storybook Project once again provided WSP information at the non-profit table at the Texas Book Festival. The Festival is a yearly event attended by authors whose presentations and book signings draw large crowds to Austin's capitol grounds.

The Storybook table offered information and a sign up sheet for those wanting to help. A notable 229 visitors took brochures and 33 potential volunteers signed up. Among these were a teacher who is considering

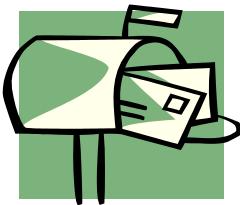
(continued on page 3—Festival)



What's Happening?

Making Connections

A letter from a grandmother



Barnes and Noble Booksellers Book Drive at the Arboretum and Brodie Lane locations - see the article below.

Feb. – June 2008 Prison Visit Schedule - you should have received this by e-mail (if not, contact Judith). If you can, please select at least two dates to volunteer and let Felicia know. We would like to open a fourth facility at Gatesville, and it is crucial to know how many volunteers are available before we can schedule a new facility.

Community Service for Area Schools

Karen Boatright and Pat Roberts will be contacting Austin and Leander schools to encourage community service involvement in WSP.

In the Works – Planning for the introduction of WSP at a Houston area facility, the Plane-Henley Complex.

"I've been doing this for almost two years and always leave the prison feeling a great sense of accomplishment - really a sense of awe that a single day can allow me to make a real difference in someone's life. Yesterday's experience was even more personally fulfilling since I got to share it with my NCJW friends. I look forward to volunteering with all of you again in the near future!"

January 18, 2007

Dear Ms. Dullnig,

This letter is in response to the Storybook Project. I would like to tell you how much it meant to my grandson to have this recording of his mother. He is 5 years old and he misses his mommy terribly.

When the package arrived I opened it up and I told him his mommy had sent him something. I explained to him that she was going to be reading him a story. So I put the tape on and we opened the book and I helped him follow along in the book, and he was just so focused on this book and the story. I saw little tears in his eyes and of course I had big tears. This means so much to him.

We have listened to this several times. I will ask him if he wants to hear the story from mommy and he will say yes, so I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your outreach program.

I will keep you in my prayers.

Sincerely,
A Grateful Caregiver

- Jeri Saper

Barnes and Noble Booksellers Book Drive for WSP

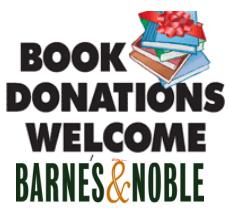
Two of Austin's Barnes and Noble Booksellers stores are currently sponsoring a book drive to benefit WSP. Last year, the book drive netted 900 books to be enjoyed by the children of incarcerated mothers in Texas!

This year's drive began on November 3 and will end December 31. People are encouraged to buy a book and leave it in the specified location at one of the two participating B&N stores (Arboretum and Brodie Lane). Children's books appropriate for ages 1-12 are needed. Since this is an interfaith organization, only non-religious books are accepted.

Please inform your organizations, schools, churches, synagogues, and businesses about this effort. Fliers and brochures are available from our director, Judith Dullnig (512) 560-8739. This is a wonderful opportunity for people in the community to participate in WSP, and as a bonus, they can be assured that they have helped to put a smile on a child's face!



Barnes and Noble
Community Relations
Managers
Left: Erin Sibley,
Brodie Lane
Right: Caren Creech
Berlanga, Arboretum





Can you help?

Contact
Judith Dullnig
(512) 560-8739

- **Coordinator to schedule volunteers** for next year's fall Texas Book Festival.
- **Drivers (male or female)** to drive volunteers to Gatesville the second and third Saturdays of each month. Great for people in need of community service credit or husbands of volunteers! (WSP will pay for your lunch and a ticket to the Coryell Museum in Gatesville if you'd like to spend the "wait" time there!)
- **Taping Party!** Come join the fun at Judith's (7325 Black Mt. Drive) Jan. 7th and 8th from 1-3 PM. We have several tapes that need to be prepared for use at the prisons. RSVP please.
- **Greeters at the Barnes and Noble Bookseller stores** weekend afternoons from 1 to 5 until December 31 to encourage customers to purchase books. Each time a book is donated to WSP, the clerk will ring a bell!

WSP Wish List

- A sponsor to donate the discounted use of a van two Saturdays a month.
- A storage facility located near South Lamar where we can keep books and supplies.
- Another business sponsor or partner – Be a business that gives back to the community!
- Money donations earmarked for educational opportunities such as the National Workshop Conference our director attended this fall.



Karen Boatright and Pat Roberts for introducing Austin and Leander schools to WSP as a possible community service idea.

Wanda Stimson, Gloria and David Kelly, Lark Anthony, Judy Darnell, Betty Frnka, Norma McCauley, and Rennie Popp for helping with the Texas Book Festival preparations, table, and banner.

Julie Todaro for her wonderful article about WSP in the fall issue of Texas Library Journal (circulation about 7000). It has already resulted in a box of 13 Spanish books from Moffett Library in Wichita Falls!

Michelle Peterson for offering to organize the WSP memorabilia into a scrapbook.

(Festival- continued from page 1)

having her class do a book drive to benefit WSP, a professor from Austin Community College who is interested in having a speaker present this program to her students, a University of Texas student who is seeking a community service project, and numerous people who indicated they planned to donate money or books.

The table's success is a tribute to the volunteers who donated their time to increase public awareness about WSP. Awareness is the first step to involvement!



National Council of Jewish Women, Austin Section, Visits Hilltop with Pat Roberts



"I loved my first time to actually go into the prison and read. I was a little nervous the night before, did not sleep well, but really more out of excitement than nervousness."

"I was amazed at the high level of reading the women did for their children and under these circumstances. My heart went out to each and every one. I hope to do many more sessions!"

~Monica Solomon

Standing: Kelly Finkel, Natalie Weinstein, Susan Ivy, Linda Cox, Pat Roberts

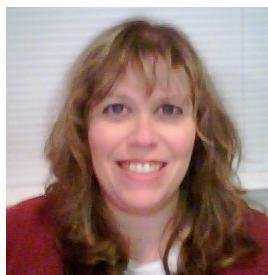
Seated: Monica Solomon, Jeri Saper, Judy Alpert, Susan Pintchovski



Volunteer Spotlight

Felicia Kutchey, Scheduling Chair

The outcome of any project is dependant on many factors, but for WSP, the one who schedules the volunteers and coordinates transportation two Saturdays every month is crucial to its success. That committed person at Storybook is Felicia Kutchey.



Felicia is a native Texan, born in Houston and raised in Bryan. She and her husband, Ron, met when he came from his native Maryland to visit a friend here in Texas. They have been married nine years, live in Cedar Park, and have two daughters; six year old Rachel and two year old Sara. Not only is she a wife and mother – she also works full time at Austin Regional Clinic in the business office.

Since volunteering is important to Kutchey, she not only does so for WSP, but she also sings in the choir at Temple Beth Shalom and helps with her daughter's Brownie troop. In her "spare time", she enjoys reading, especially books by Tami Hoag, a best selling romantic fiction and suspense novel writer. She also has a secret desire – to meet Ellen Degeneres and be on her television talk show!

However, Felicia's overt longing is to volunteer with WSP. Kutchey has been with Storybook since Judy Fox, at Temple Beth Shalom, shared with her the newly forming plans for WSP. Considered a "founding member", Felicia participated in the prison visits in her earlier years of involvement. With the birth of her second child, she still wanted to participate, but found the Saturday trips to be impractical. That's when she took over scheduling visits for other volunteers. Now, every month she schedules volunteers for all three Gatesville facilities, assists in coordinating car pools and drivers, and communicates with team leaders to provide pertinent information. Kutchey looks forward to the day when she can once again experience tapping the offenders as they read to their children.

She states, "When I first went to prison and came back, I was overwhelmed with the women's responses and empathized with their situations. The mother's involvement in the telling of the story touched my heart as it may be the only connection she has with her child."

Working with the women involved in WSP is very rewarding for Felicia. She is proud to be involved with such committed, warm women whose common mission is to minister to the children of incarcerated mothers and grandmothers.



WSP: Helping to Transform Lives

The Association on Programs for Female Offenders (APFO) sponsored the 12th National Conference on Adult and Juvenile Offenders in Baltimore, Maryland, on October 20-24. This year's theme, "Transforming Lives, Soaring to New Horizons", addressed leading edge issues in five days of presentations, discussions, and workshops. The bi-annual forum attracted over 1000 professionals nationally and internationally, and WSP's director, Judith Dullnig, was among the attendees. Encouraged by Nancy Botkin, a retired warden from Gatesville and an avid WSP advocate, Judith attended in hopes of establishing networking connections, enhancing her knowledge in the area of recidivism issues, and to explore the possibility of speaking about WSP at the next workshop in 2009.

Criminal justice speakers emphasized the importance of strength building (self-esteem) as a means of transforming lives and ensuring successful re-entry of offenders into society. WSP works in perfect tandem with these goals by providing opportunities for the children to connect with their mothers through the recordings before the mothers' re-entries occur. In addition, the self-esteem of the mothers improves as a result of having demonstrated good parenting, which is consistent with the concept of strength building. Case in point: at Woodman Jail, Principal Laurie Rockwood intentionally selects



(continued on page 5—Transform)

(Transform—continued from page 4)

Storybook participants three to four months prior to their release date in order to smooth the progress of re-entry into their families.

Another significant educational goal of the conference was the interactive participation of attendees. While mingling with participants from other states, Judith explained Texas's WSP program. Her listeners responded with eagerness and enthusiasm to this novel idea. As the concept of Women's Storybook Project spreads across the nation, this very worthwhile project promises to continue assisting in the transformation of many lives.



"Going to the prison is a highlight of my month. The women appreciate it so much and I can always imagine the joy of the children when they get the tape and book."

—Ellen Loeb

(Interview—continued from page 1)

a “hearts and flowers kind of warden”, but it was that caring and concern, in combination with firmness, that earned her the respect of all who came in contact with her.

Asked why she was so passionate about the women in her care, she responded, “I looked at it as mission work; I really enjoyed it...I care about offenders and their children. I worked visitations

and saw the impact of children visiting mothers and knew we had to do something for the kids. Statistics show that two out of every five kids whose parents are in prison, end up in prison themselves. I wanted to do something to impact that – to soothe feelings.”

Enter Judith Dullnig with the Storybook Project...and the stage was set for the first ever Storybook Project visit to the Hilltop unit where Warden Botkin was “so glad WSP was there, that I wanted to get up and click my heels together!” With politicians ignoring the importance of programming to reduce recidivism in deference to the budgetary needs, volunteer programs are extremely important to fill the gap. Consequently, Warden Botkin had no problem navigating the approval of Storybook within the administration.

Where would Warden Botkin like to see WSP go in the future? “Into every female unit in the state, of course, but males, too,” she states with passion. With over 100 prison facilities in the state of Texas, that’s a tall order, but one Storybook would love to fill. Women’s Storybook of Texas primarily focuses on female facilities due to the fact that, typically, mothers are the primary caregivers for children, and programs to facilitate that relationship are in need.

*(Part two of Retired Warden Botkin's interview,
“Life Inside the Razor Wire”,
will be in the next issue of Book Notes.)*



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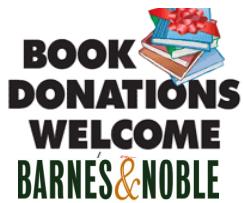
Who's Who

Judith Dullnig, Director
Judy Fox, Volunteer Chair
Felicia Kutchey, Scheduling Chair
Sylvia Fitz, Supplies Chair
Kathy Brothers, Communications Chair
Pat Roberts, Newsletter Chair
Angela Nunley, Newsletter Production Chair
Nancy Wallace, Lane Murray Team Leader
Paula Jameson, Lane Murray Team Leader
Judy Darnell, Woodman Team Leader
Liz Davis, Woodman Team Leader
Pat Roberts, Hilltop Team Leader
Lynne Riley, Hilltop Team Leader

jjdull@earthlink.net
jzfox@sbcglobal.net
r2fkutchey1@yahoo.com
sylvia.fitz@sbcglobal.net
kdbrothers@hotmail.com
pastrob@swbell.net
angelanunley@gmail.com
nweichertwallace@satx.rr.com
tmys@austin.rr.com
adarnell@austin.rr.com
bbqliz@austin.rr.com
patsrob@swbell.net
lynne_riley@sbcglobal.net



Austin Community Foundation
P.O. Box 5159
Austin, TX 78763



Women's Storybook Project Partners with Barnes and Noble

November 3 - December 31

Please purchase a children's book at
Barnes and Noble (Arboretum and
Brodie Lane locations) for
Women's Storybook Project of Texas.
See page 2 inside for details.

