

A Note from your Director

Dear WSP Volunteers and Supporters,

It seems that each Fall, we in WSP are busier and busier! The season began with the wonderful experience of seeing Sandy Hain, our documentarian, at work. I was on the verge of enrolling in a graduate degree in filmmaking after assisting him! We are fortunate not only to have a professional (he has done work for *National Geographic*) doing pro bono work for WSP, but he is genuinely fond of our program.

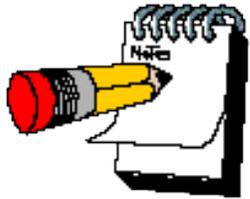
The Texas Book Festival's WSP table, with Susanna Busico planning and following up, generated several inquiries. Included was a contact from Americorp who wanted to share our needs with her students, and also an offer from an attorney, pro bono, should WSP need legal advice.

The Barnes and Noble Holiday Book Drives are underway and "greeters" are still needed at the Town and Country/Houston and La Cantera/San Antonio. This is a good community service project for youth groups, Scouts and even grandmothers and grandchildren. Warden Nancy Botkin is coming from Gatesville to be a "greeter" with her granddaughter for a shift.

I have some wonderful news to share! Recent comments from some TDCJ administrators offer high praise for Storybook Project. Former Warden Botkin declared, "In my 24 years of service with TDCJ, this is by far the most organized, most efficient and most effective volunteer program that I have ever seen." Major Henson expressed her approval with, "We love your program. You come quietly, do good work, and leave without creating extra work for us." Warden Howard enthusiastically announced, "This program should be in every prison. I love this program!"

All of this is due to the dedication of our volunteers and supporters.

Judith



Wonderful News for Storybook!

The Heineman Foundation in NY, NY, after careful consideration of numerous worthy organizations, has accepted Women's Storybook Project of Texas' as one of their grant recipients. The board was so impressed with the project that they generously decided to double the amount asked for in the application to assist with equipment, transportation, postage, and the purchase of books! This grant is hopefully the first of many large donations which will help WSP grow and expand into even more prison units. Thank you, Heineman Foundation!



Book Notes

The communications newsletter of
Women's Storybook Project of Texas

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**WSP
THANKS**

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HOME INSPECTION**
(512) 515-0021
*for donating the printing and
distribution of Book Notes*

**Want to make a tax free contribution?
Send it to:**

**Women's Storybook Project of Texas
c/o Austin Community Foundation
P.O. Box 5159 Austin, TX 78763
a 501(c)3 non-profit organization**

Lights! Camera! Action!

Part One of Four Parts: On the Set at Plane Henley State Jail

When Ellie Chaikind, one of Plane Henley State Jail's co-leaders, told her son-in-law, Sandy Hain, about Storybook Project, he was VERY interested. He volunteered to produce a marketing documentary to showcase the importance of this simple idea.

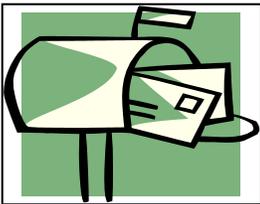
After many conversations with Judith, and months of preparation, permission for the filming was granted by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the stage was set! Saturday, October 24th, the team leaders, Ellie and JoAnn, along with Judith and Sandy arrived for an intense and exciting day at Plane Henley. With Sandy hauling in all the video and audio equipment, you can imagine how long and thorough the security search was despite Warden Howard's prior notification to the front gate.

After the camera was in place, the mikes readied, the lighting equipment raised, and the cords taped down, everyone rushed back to the restaurant where the other eight volunteers were waiting. Amid enchiladas and chalupas, Sandy questioned the volunteers about their experiences with WSP. Then it was off to the prison for the infamous pat down!

Once settled into the opening circle, the purpose of Sandy's visit was explained to all the mothers, who then willingly signed release forms. Sandy was able to capture them reading to their children, and by the time everyone was in the closing circle, the atmosphere was natural and very moving. One volunteer mentioned that she truly cared about all of the offenders and their children, and Sandy's camera captured the silent tears sliding down the cheeks of the offenders. Choruses of "Thank you, thank you, thank you, Storybook!" were heard.

--- See Page 4 for Part Two ---





Making Connections

A moving letter
of gratitude
from a
grandmother

To all concerned
I just want you all
to know, no amount
of counselling or
progressive steps,
can compare with this
wonderful project, just
to see my Grandchildren's
eyes light up, the smile
on their faces, to hear
mummy's voice
reading the storybook,
this book is so awesome
The whole project is
so dynamic and I want
you to know from my
point of view this is
such a blessing for my

Grandchildren. if you can
only imagine! How
Happy these two boys were
to receive this gift what
a blessing! and I commend
all of you for taking
this time to do this
they came to us like
showers of blessings.
my boys listen to mummy's
voice, every night before
they go to bed it gives
some thing to hold on
to
Thank you Thank you

L. V.



- **Sandy Hain** for donating his time to come to Texas from California to film WSP in action in Houston, Austin, and Dayton and for interviewing a wide range of folks involved in making this project what it is. His expertise and effort to make an informative documentary for Storybook's use on the website and for presentations is deeply appreciated.
- **Susanna Busico** for agreeing to co-lead Lane Murray with Nancy Wallace and for overseeing WSP participation at the Texas Book Festival.
- **Jill Bacon, Marcie Hursting, JoAn Martin, Susan Robertson, Lydia Hewett, Julia Taylor, Mary Lou Batlan, Anna Phillips, JoAnne Nelson, Liz Davis, Catherine Zahn, Shannon Zahn, Ellen Loeb and Nancy Snyder** for helping at the Texas Book Festival.

- **Kate Moss** for her diligent work scheduling the "greeters" over two months of weekends for the Holiday Book Drive at Barnes and Noble Arboretum in Austin. On the opening weekend, over 100 books were donated; greeters make a difference!
- **Ellie Chaikind, JoAnn Innerarity, and Len Chaikind** for scheduling and working at Barnes and Noble Town and Country book drive in Houston.
- **Pat Yeargain and St. Matthew's Episcopal Church** for making arrangements and providing space for the special Storybook TDCJ training.
- **Warden Nancy Botkin and Major Henson** for traveling to Austin to conduct TDCJ training for Storybook volunteers.
- **An Anonymous offender** for making a donation to WSP.
- **Woodlands Christian Academy** for donating the change from the purchases at their book fair.





Volunteer Spotlight

Ellie Chaikind

Plane Henley Co-Leader

Ellie Chaikind is a co-leader for Plane Henley, Storybook's most recently added facility.

Ellie is a Houston resident. She and her husband of 51 years, Len, met on a blind date in their native Connecticut many years ago. Since then, their family has grown to include a son and a daughter, their spouses, and four grandchildren. The families are split between the East and the West Coast, but once a year, the entire family unit meets for a family vacation.

In 1970, Len's transfer with Shell to Houston, along with 1,000 other families, brought them to Texas. However, from 1977-81 they were "temporarily" living in London affording the



family wonderful educational and travel experiences before they once again returned to Houston and Ellie's private psychotherapist practice which

she still has at this time.

Ellie became involved with WSP when her niece, Ilene Gray, shared her wonderful experience with Storybook. Ellie loved the idea and let it be known if WSP was ever in the Houston area, she would be a willing participant. It didn't take long for Judith to put Plane Henley's interest in having WSP and Ellie's interest in being involved together to make a winning formula! Ellie was in on the "ground floor" at Plane Henley.

A member of the Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism Temple, Ellie works to find more volunteers in the hopes that Plane Henley will soon be expanding. "It is the most touching and inspirational work I have done in terms of my volunteer work," she vehemently states. 



Communication! Communication!

Luncheons with wardens, principals, counselors and WSP staff are taking place. Senior Warden Strong from Lane Murray, Ms. Gise, principal of Lane Murray and Mt. View, Ms. Kinsey and others from Windham School District had a very productive meeting on November 5 discussing new procedures and concerns. Team Leaders Nancy Wallace and Susanna Busico and Director Judith Dullnig talked about what's happening with WSP and its future.

Everyone seemed to enjoy this opportunity, with TDCJ officers and the Windham staff jointly showing their support of WSP. Appreciation of Storybook was evident as everyone listened intently while Judith read a letter from a grandmother. Smiles ensued all around. 

Lights! Camera! Action!

Part Two: Interview with Senior Warden Howard

After leaving the offenders, the camera equipment was moved to the library for the interview with Warden Howard. Although she warmly welcomed the interview experience, she confessed that she had completely forgotten and was wearing her "dress down" uniform, a polo shirt and jeans. Ellie kindly offered her pretty blue paisley jacket and the tape started rolling.

At times, this powerful interview brought tears to the eyes of Storybook volunteers Ellie, JoAnn, and Judith. Statements by Warden Howard heralding Storybook's effects were moving. Here are a few of them:

"I have had communication with some of the offenders since they left Plane Henley. Those that were in Storybook are doing so much better in the community. They feel good about themselves. They are reading to their children, and they understand why it is so important to be a mother to their children. "

"There are so many negative things on TV about prisons, with Storybook this is some-

(Continued on Page 5—Interview)



IMPORTANT REMINDERS

WSP APPLICATION PROCEDURE HAS CHANGED!

When completing the application (contact our volunteer chairman, Judy Fox, at jzfox@sbcglobal.net for an updated application), please write WSP under "Unit of Interest". Mail the completed application to Windham School District/Attention Connie McMurrey, P.O. Box 40, Huntsville, Texas 77342. (Ignore the address given on the application!)

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION!

If your email or physical address changes or you have new phone numbers (home or cell), be sure to notify Judy Fox so that the Storybook database remains current.



What's Happening?

•A very successful training/retraining session specifically for WSP volunteers was completed Saturday, November 7 at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church with 18 Storybook volunteers in attendance. Major Suzanne Henson and Nancy Botkin agreed to lead this training, stating that Storybook is the best volunteer project they've seen in all their years of service in the prisons. Kudos to all the volunteers whose work has earned this reputation!

•A date for our Storybook Social has been set thanks to the generous offer of a new volunteer, Kathie Hanson, to use her fabulous home. Save the date: April 24.

•Our Volunteer Chairman, Judy Fox, has won a National 2008 Best Book Award with USA Book News in the category of Health Death and Dying for the book she co-authored, Voices of Strength-Daughters and Sons of Suicide Speak. She has also been nominated as a finalist for the 2009 Book of the Year Award in the category of Self Help with ForeWord Reviews, a publication primarily for librarians. Radio host Dr. Laura Schlessinger is also promoting the book as well! Congratulations, Judy!

(Continued from Page 4—Interview)

thing positive for the child. They receive a present, and they can hear their mother's voice. The voice is so important!"

"This program is so unique! It's not just reaching the children; it is reaching the offender and changing their self-esteem. One offender contacted me after her release and told me she was reading to her child and going to the library."

"We are also seeing changes within the prison. After one offender had been in Storybook, her behavior completely changed. She started working on her GED. She was choosing to be with more positive offenders and becoming a leader."

Parts Three and Four in a future Issue



Can you help?

- **Greeters** are needed for the Barnes and Noble Book Drives. We are very fortunate to have three Barnes and Noble stores in three different cities (Austin, San Antonio, and Houston) collecting books for WSP this Holiday Season. Greeters are especially needed at Barnes and Noble, Town and Country in-Houston. (Contact JoAnn Innerarity at mjinnerarity@comcast.net) Also for La Cantera in San Antonio (Contact Judith Dullnig at jjdull@earthlink.net)
- **Transcribers** are needed by our pro bono producer, Sandy Hain, to expedite the creation of our documentary. This would involve transcribing interviews from tapes into typed hard copies. Contact Judith Dullnig if you are able to help.



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



Women's Storybook Project of Texas Helping to Make Connections

