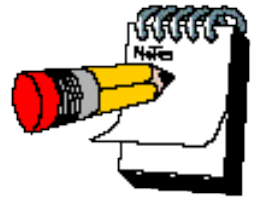


A Note from your Director

My intended message for our 4th issue of Book Notes was to tell everyone about a lovely luncheon and productive meetings I had with Texas Department of Criminal Justice personnel. However, after the February trip to Woodman Jail, I wanted to share that entire experience with you instead. This is an example of what situations may arise and how WSP volunteers make our program work.



With the passing of Felicia's mother, we wanted to temporarily relieve her of the huge task of Scheduling Chair. It was time to organize for the February visit to Woodman.

Kate Moss, the designated driver, was called at the last minute to conduct a Saturday workshop pertaining to her job. Angela Nunley immediately offered to drive. Angela, however, called Thursday morning and said she had the flu. But we only cancel a Saturday when all possibilities have been exhausted or the prison notifies us of the necessity to cancel. Judy Fox offered to take my place as the guest speaker at Cedar Park Methodist Church, and my hunt for a mini-van rental began, but proved to be unsuccessful. I called Kate for the name of the rental agency she uses. They had a mini-van and my husband drove me to the airport Friday night to pick it up. We would not have to cancel WSP after all!

After picking up the volunteers at Sam's, including new volunteer, Carol Reese, and a delay on I35, we finally arrived at Pruitt's diner. We had lunch and headed to Woodman only to discover that Carol's name was not on the list. Things were settled, and we began our recordings. Although we were missing two volunteers, the offenders were able to read to each of their children. Despite the hour delay due to construction returning home, and a trip with many mishaps, the day in Gatesville, as always, was very rewarding.



I had to relate to the volunteers the story of a mother who asked if she could record a song rather than a short message. Before the story was recorded, she sang beautifully to each child the song "You are my Sunshine, my only Sunshine." I will always remember the smile on her face when she sang the name of each child during the song.

Carol Reese jumped right in and recorded several mothers and vowed she would be returning. Judy Fox was a wonderful speaker for the United Methodist Women of Cedar Park, bringing tears to the audience as she read letters from children and guardians. She also recruited some volunteers and encouraged the ladies to collect mailers for the month of March.

Thank you to all the volunteers who travel to Gatesville and to all the volunteers that work behind the scenes. You continue to make this special program so meaningful to children who cannot be with their incarcerated mothers.

Judith



What's Happening?

- WSP has secured a 10 x 10 storage unit to hold the copious amounts of books, tapes, and mailers that our growing project has amassed!
- The United Methodist Women's group in Cedar Park will be conducting a mailer drive throughout the month of March.
- Holt McDougal, an Austin publisher of middle and high school textbooks, selected the Women's Storybook Project of Texas as its cafeteria charity for the first quarter of 2008. Whether buying hot drinks at the coffee bar or food in the cafeteria, employees may drop their change into containers next to the cash registers. This fund raising effort is one more avenue for raising awareness of the Storybook Project.

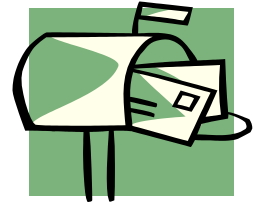
Taping Party



At our recent "taping party", volunteers Judy Fox, Ellen Loeb, Beverly Rodman, Judy Darnell, and Liz Davis assisted in preparing donated tapes for use at the prison.

Making Connections

A letter from a caregiver



We are writing to let you know how wonderful it was to receive that tape.

Words can't ever express what it meant to my grandson or to me as well - being her mother. Not only it was a big surprise, it was the first & only time we have heard her sweet voice outside of that prison wall in almost 13 yrs. She is 12 now & it's been very hard not being able to send her anything except for money.

These children need to hear their mother's voice outside of a room of 30 people. It is the greatest thing in the world to me & my grandson. God Bless You & whoever thought it up.

and keep up the great work.

It's nice to know someone else cares about what all these children go through besides just the family.

Some Offender Comments

"My five year old son relates the farmer in his book to his Paw Paw. He listens to his book from me every night. Since I have had no part of his life for years, it really touches me that I can be a part of his life in this way." - Angie

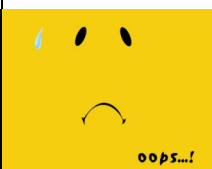
"My 5 year old autistic son had been hitting his grandmother when he was frustrated. I read him the book Tickle Me Elmo and in my closing message, I told him that when he feels like hitting his grandmother, to tickle her instead. His grandmother told me this week it is working! He tickled her instead of hitting. He also carries his train book from the first month around saying "Mommy loves me", kissing the book."

- Kathryn

Corrections

Our apologies for the following errors in the last issue of Book Notes:

- Bob Kelly's name was miswritten as David Kelly in the Thank You section.
- Lori Rockwood's name was misspelled in the article WSP: Helping to Transform Lives.



Life Inside the Razor Wire

*Part two of an Interview with
Retired Warden Nancy Botkin*

Currently, Women's Storybook Project is active in three of the six women's units of the Gatesville prison system: Woodman State Jail, the Lane Murray Unit, and the Hilltop Unit. Our goal is to include another facility as early as this spring. Many volunteers have expressed an interest in knowing about the state jail and prison units where we are located.

Each of these facilities is an independent community, like a city with its own doctors, nurses, schools, laundry, etc., according to Retired Warden Nancy Botkin, who explained the basic layout in a recent interview. Prisoners have many options for rehabilitation programs including AA, NA, sexual offenders classes, religious programs, and Youthful Offenders. Windham I.S.D. is the prison system's school district. Offenders have an opportunity to obtain their GED, and, with the financial support of their family, can even seek continuing education. An offender may be a full time student or have a job (anything from beautician to hog farmer!) within the prison grounds.

Unless an offender is in medium custody, they are housed in dorms with each woman given a cubical in a room with 50-100 other inmates. Offenders are out of the housing area about 7 hours of the day; the remaining time they can write letters or go to recreation. They are allowed a contact visit with friends and family every weekend so long as they are in a good custody level. Phone calls are limited to one 5 minute supervised call every 90 days but timing cannot be prearranged. For the children who live too far away to visit, this means very limited contact with their mother. This is where WSP helps to bridge the gap.

In the next issue of Book Notes, look for articles featuring each of the current units where WSP is making a difference.



- **Pattie Rose** for typing up and printing all the mailing labels!
- **Reverend Elizabeth Turner** for taking care of all fund reimbursements.
- **Wanda Stimson** for submitting WSP for consideration in the Holt McDougal Publishing Company cafeteria charity event.
- **Sarah Lindsey and her 4th grade class** from Casis Elementary School in Austin for donating books during the Christmas holidays.
- **Good News United Methodist Church** for collecting 35 books on Christmas Eve for WSP.
- **Mona Carver** for offering to assist with Barnes and Noble's 2008 Holiday Book Drive.



Can you help?

**Contact
Judith Dullnig
(512) 560-8739**

Calling All Potential WSP Volunteers...

if you are thinking of volunteering, or know someone who might be interested, now's the time! WSP needs more volunteers to meet our spring goal of opening another facility. Book Notes issues 1 and 2 were dedicated to explaining the history and purpose of WSP as well as the volunteering "how to's" and benefits. Electronic files of those two issues are available upon request (send your request to Pat Roberts at patsrob@swbell.net with the subject title WSP Book Notes request). If you are ready to take that first step, contact Judy Fox at jzfox@austin.rr.com or if email is not available, you may reach Judy at 512-259-4115.

If you are in need of brochures (to leave in places where potential volunteers might find them) contact Judith Dullnig.



Volunteer Spotlight

Sylvia Fitz, Supplies Chairman

"I'm out of books!" "We need tapes!" "Are there more mailers?" Who can respond to these questions from the team leaders better than our own dependable Sylvia Fitz?

Sylvia was born and raised in Coventry, England, where she completed much of her education. She met her husband in London while he was stationed there in the US Navy. During his military career, they and their two sons lived in Virginia, Africa, Scotland, and then finally retired in Florida. His new pharmaceutical job led them to the Dallas area, where Sylvia taught for three years. After attaining her citizenship, she worked for many years as a Civil Servant in IRS management. Their next, and seemingly final,

destination was Austin, where Sylvia has been for over 30 years.

She lost her husband 10 years ago, but enjoys her two sons, Tracy and Glenn, and her two granddaughters, who all live in the Dallas area. Her hobbies include bowling, knitting, gardening, walking, and traveling. Every year, Sylvia strives to take a trip overseas. Her two favorite locations? Australia and Hawaii. She is looking forward to planning a trip to Hong Kong in the future.



Sylvia's favorite quote is a Chinese Proverb she found in the church in Dorset, England, where Lawrence of Arabia is buried.


*If there be righteousness in the heart,
there will be beauty in the character.*

*If there is beauty in the character there
will be harmony in the home.*

*If there is harmony in the home, there
will be order in the nation.*

*When there is order in each nation there
will be peace in the world.*

She is a member of St. Mark's Episcopal Church where she sings in the choir and works on the Outreach Committee. It was through this committee that she first learned about WSP and began participating in the trips to Gatesville. In time, she decided to step back to allow other volunteers the memorable experience of recording mothers' voices and focus her volunteer energy on organizing supplies. As Storybook grew, so did the stacks of books, mailers and tapes occupying her spare bedroom, shed, and garage! What a relief the newly acquired storage facility promises!

Being the "behind the scenes" supply person for WSP has been most satisfying for Sylvia who loves this "marvelous idea that is very rewarding to volunteers and the children". 

Barnes and Noble: A Wealth of Books!

The Women's Storybook Project was the grateful recipient of the Barnes and Noble Holiday Book Drive at three of its Austin area locations: Arboretum, Brodie Lane, and West Lake. The efforts of community relations managers (see photo) and the WSP volunteers Angela Nunley, Pat Roberts, Linda Anderson, Judy Fox, Judy Darnell, Kelly Finkel, Susan Pintchosvski and Julia Taylors, who greeted customers through the holidays, netted an astonishing 2,500 books donated to the children of incarcerated women. Thank you to all who made this a wonderful success!



Caren Creech,
Erin Sibley,
and Jo Virgil

Barnes and Noble
Community
Relations
Managers

Storybook Ripples

Through word of mouth, the Storybook Program's reputation spreads throughout the prison population like a pebble making ripples in a pond. From the notice on the common bulletin board, offenders can apply to participate. Requirements may vary from one unit to the next, but basically offenders must meet certain conditions: have a child (or grandchild) between ages 0-12; have minimal custody restrictions; have a clean disciplinary record; and not have been in the program recently.

WSP is used to both reward good behavior and to be an incentive to improve behavior. "Oh, there are a lot of offenders who have straightened up just so they can go through that program!" remarked retired Warden Botkin. One offender stated to Pat Roberts that she has seen offenders remind one another to "straighten up" so they won't lose this privilege. As the approximately 10 months of clean behavior required to participate in the full program pass, some offenders are pleasantly surprised, as they "didn't know they could act right", Botkin noted. Furthermore, she affirms that that new pattern of good behavior often continues, as the offenders want to repeat the program when they are allowed.

Employees at the prison are affected as well. Some officers (despite being "hard nosed" about many things, Botkin noted) volunteer to come

back and help again after filling in for the regular Storybook officers. Impacted by what they see as mothers read to their children, they wholly support this program. Other officials, such as the instructor in this following letter, are moved by the impact the program has on the offenders:

Hello Judith,

It was nice to see you today and I just wanted to extend a personal thank you to all of you. I wish you could sit in my classroom on the Monday after we do Storybook and hear the comments that the women make. It means so much to them. It is also such a good motivator because it makes them stop and think sometimes before they "go off" that if they get a case, they won't get to be in the project for at least 90 days. I believe that some of them are planning on sending you letters about what it means to them. I love my job and am blessed beyond measure to get to work with the women that I have in my classes, and women like you, who take the time and have the compassion to help others.

Thank you again,

LaVonda Popp

Parenting/Woodman State Jail

Storybook is indeed a pebble making big ripples in the pond. 



**Has your address changed ?
Make a financial contribution ?
Add a supporter to the mailing list ?**

**Women's Storybook Project of Texas
c/o Austin Community Foundation
P.O. Box 5159 Austin, TX 78763**



**WSP thanks
PILLAR TO POST
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(512) 515-0021
for donating the printing and
distribution of Book Notes**

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Felicia Kutchey, Scheduling Chair
Sylvia Fitz, Supplies Chair
Kathy Brothers, Communications Chair
Pat Roberts, Newsletter Chair
Angela Nunley, Newsletter Production Chair
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Austin Community Foundation
P.O. Box 5159
Austin, TX 78763

* "I would like to say that before entering this pro-
* gram, my kids were only watching television,
* now they are exploring books and want to read."
* - SP

* "Storybook has been my only means of talking to
* my 11 yr. old daughter. She is in Oregon so visits
* are not possible. These tapes are the link we have
* for her to hear the sound of my voice (we've been
* apart since she was 8). I am told she listens to
* the tapes over and over - when she's sad or
* lonely, happy and joyful. Thank You!" WB

* "Storybook is a great opportunity, it has given
* my daughter and I a chance to get closer while
* I am away. I love it. It brings joy to not only
* the child and mother but the whole house-
* hold. Who would imagine how close this can
* get you to your child. We have gotten so much
* closer and we both look forward to reading
* together when I get home. Thank you so
* much storybook." - A

* "I'm grateful for Storybook and their volunteers.
* I've been given the opportunity to bond with my
* son, through books. This program is very help-
* ful, and has encouraged my son to the World of
* Books. Thank You." DM
