



# 2014 ANNUAL REPORT





# Connecting Families

I first conceived of Women's Storybook Project from a friend in Kentucky who volunteered for a similar project. I had no experience working with inmates or their families. I was not familiar with criminal justice statistics, especially those documenting female prisoners.

As a student of educational psychology, I could see the intrinsic value of a mother reading a book to her child, and the child following the sound of her voice. I could see the enormous benefits of this experience to mothers living behind prison walls and their children on the outside.

I continue to be impressed with the simplicity, and yet the power, of this type of project. For a modest amount of time and money, we help thousands of families stay connected notwithstanding the distance and hardship that separates parent and child.

Our volunteers constantly remark that this program is as transformative for them as it is to the families they serve. They believe that helping these women regain their motherhood strengthens not only individual families, but entire communities.



I hope that you will find our first annual report informative and inspiring. We're proud of our progress – including several awards – and look forward to turning more pages and more lives in the future.

Most gratefully,

*Judith Dullnig*

Judith Dullnig  
*President & Founder*

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# How Far We've Come

After lengthy research and consultation with staff at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Judith Dullnig launched the Women's Storybook Project of Texas in 2003 as an outreach program of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Austin.

Storybook began with five volunteers who carried four tape recorders to the Hilltop facility in Gatesville to record 25 books. A decade later, 178 volunteers deploy to six of the eight Texas Department of Criminal Justice Prisons to record and mail about 350 new books and tapes to children across the United States each month.

Initially under the umbrella of Austin Community Foundation, Women's Storybook Project (WSP) has recently been granted its own 501(c)3 status with a goal to provide services for all applicable female prisons in Texas.

WSP's volunteers come from many backgrounds and interests. We have mothers, students, grandmothers, retired teachers and librarians, and professional women who help record and mail about 350 books each month to help these children.

## Our Future Is Bright

- Creating new partnerships with three more prison units – San Saba, Hobby, and Crain, which allows us to reach hundreds of additional mothers.
- Upgrading technology from outdated tape recorders and cassettes (which are difficult for caretakers to acquire) to CDs in each partner prison to enable conversion of audio stories on site, minimizing risk of recording errors and time between recording and delivery.
- Extending Women's Storybook Project to mothers re-entering the community by providing literacy resources and parenting support.

## Awards

Since its inception, Women's Storybook Project has received the following awards:

**Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Award – received 3 times!**

**National Crime Prevention Council**

**Peace with Justice (United Methodist Church)**

**Irving J. Fain Social Action Award (Reform Judaism)**



**Mothers who recorded stories**

**1,291** | **9,175**  
Annual | Historical



**Children who received books**

**2,578** | **20,100**  
Annual | Historical



**Books donated to children**

**2,126** | **24,200**  
Annual | Historical



**Volunteer hours**

**3,171** | **14,900**  
Annual | Historical



**Mileage volunteers travel**

**49,000** | **439,200**  
Annual | Historical



# Addressing a Crisis

**Statistics show that children of incarcerated parents are six to eight times more likely to get involved in a criminal lifestyle<sup>1</sup>. In addition, these children are more likely to be subjected to a life of poverty, mental illness, substance abuse and neglect.<sup>2</sup>**

The Women's Storybook Project is quietly responding to this crisis by connecting families and providing the following benefits:

- Children find reassurance that their mothers love them
- Children hear their mothers' voices, an important connection since birth
- Children are encouraged to read along with the recordings
- Mothers model an interest in literacy and demonstrate positive parenting
- Participating mothers are chosen based on good behavior
- Mothers' self esteem improves while helping their children
- Audio stories often lead to other forms of communication including letter writing and prison visits
- Mothers who record stories are motivated to nurture those relationships when they are released from prison



“**The readings allow the mothers to be in service to their children. They are the only people who can do this very important work.**

– Volunteer

1 LIS, Inc. (February 2002). Services For Families of Prison Inmates, Special Issues in Corrections. National Institute of Corrections, Longmont, Colorado: U.S. Department of Justice.

2 Gabel and Shinkedecker. (July 1993). Characteristics of Children Whose Parents Have Been Incarcerated. Hospital and Community Psychiatry.

# Prison Partners

# Open Book Parties

# Volunteer Profile

## Women's Storybook Project of Texas builds relationships

between mothers behind bars and their children on the outside. Volunteers record the mothers reading books to their children. The mothers also include a short message. The children receive a copy of the recording and a new book each month. Since 2003, WSP has added prisons and mothers to its program. In 2014, six prisons and approximately 2,500 women were participating.



## Women's Storybook Project volunteers enable the incarcerated mothers to record books and personal messages with ease.

They demonstrate respect for the prisoners and are often witness to transformative change.

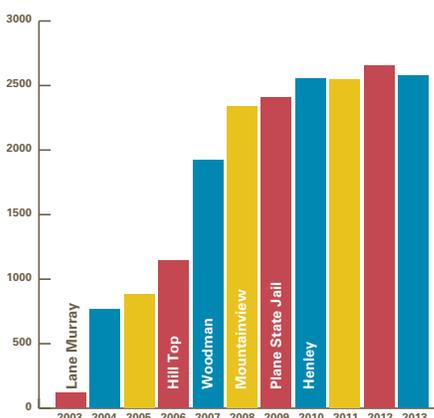
Volunteers who visit prisons are female. The volunteers schedule group visits to partner prisons and drive together as teams. Volunteer ages range from college age to retirement. Many have been with WSP for five or more years – they find great satisfaction in their service. We welcome new volunteers every month.

We also have volunteers who do the very important work of formatting recordings, mailing book packages and sorting donated books. These volunteers are often husbands of our prison volunteers, supporters of Storybook, and college students.

## Supporters of Women's Storybook Project host Open Book Parties to tell others about the project that means so much to them.

More than a dozen Open Book Parties have resulted in new volunteers and donors. Most importantly, they have opened the eyes and minds of people who were unfamiliar WSP.

Prison Partners & Participating Mothers



“ I didn't know if the recording was a good idea because my granddaughter missed her mother so much and I thought hearing her voice would be too hard. But she was excited and replayed the tape over and over and has memorized the words in the book.

– Guardian



# Words of Gratitude

**Thank you for sharing your time, talents and treasures with  
Women's Storybook Project.**

## Donors

The Heineman  
Foundation

Yeti Coolers

Pillar to Post

Ann McEldowney

Kathryn D. & Charles  
A. Brothers Fund

Pan American Round  
Table of Austin

Delta Kappa Gamma,  
Chapter

Juanita Peterson Fund,  
Austin District of the  
United Methodist  
Church

Barnes and Noble,  
Arboretum

Barnes and Noble,  
Brodie

Barnes and Noble,  
La Cantera

St. Mark's Episcopal  
Church

Temple Beth Shalom  
Westlake Methodist  
Church

St. Matthew's  
Episcopal Church

Grace Episcopal  
Church, Georgetown

IT students from UT  
McComb's School of  
Business

Dr. and Mrs.  
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Martha Kleymeyer  
AnnMarie Olson, Dds

Sandy Hain

Joe Strouse

Scott Thompson

Brandon Dickerson

Jeff Bowden

Besher Garcia

## WSP Leaders

Jan Abbott

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Rhonda Chandler

Liz Davis

Megan Hedgecock

JoAnn Innararity

Felicia Kutchey

Ellen Loeb

JoAn Martin

Betsy McCraine

Angela Nunley

Steve Nunley

Jeri Saper

Nancy Wallace

Pat Yeargain

“ Thank you for building blocks of love between my child, my grandmother, and myself.

– Incarcerated mother, Mountainview Unit



# 2014 Financials

**Women's Storybook Project knows how to stretch a dollar by keeping overhead low and accepting donations throughout the year.**

In 2014, we were blessed with very successful book drives, increasing our overall inventory to more than 10,000 children's books. Donors and volunteers also gave generously.

**RECEIPTS = \$54,234**



**EXPENSES = \$55,084**



**10,200 books  
valued at  
\$102,000**

In 2015, we expect to add a part time operations manager and continue to improve technology so we can serve more families across Texas. To balance these additional expenses, WSP is implementing a formal fundraising plan that includes events, individual donations and grants. In addition, the Board has approved up to \$25,000 transfer of reserves for expenses related to the new staff position.

“Dear Whoever gets this note, please let my [mom], Gina, keep reading the books on tape, one more thing: I love hearing her voice.”

– Cameron



**WOMEN'S  
STORYBOOK  
PROJECT**  
OF TEXAS

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