Our Mission: Connecting children with their incarcerated moms through the joy of literature.

A Simple Idea with a Big Impact: We record moms in prison reading books aloud for their kids. We mail the books and recordings to the kids. We foster connection between mother and child. Through turning pages, we are turning lives.
Each year I’m amazed, pleased, and proud of the progress of Women’s Storybook Project!

I remember that first Saturday in 2003 when WSP first went to prison. After helping Anne Mooney, MSW, design this program, and receiving permission from Warden Nancy Botkin, five of us entered the Hilltop Unit carrying 25 books, four cassette recorders, cassettes, and padded mailers. I remember hearing the gate click as I mentally reviewed what we would do. The afternoon flew by, and we left toting the mailers filled with books and mothers’ voices. We were excited about what had happened, and I was already thinking how to improve the next time. When we went the following month, a mom told us that her child took the tape and book to bed with her. I knew then that we had a special program.

Now, WSP is in eight (soon to be nine) Texas Department of Criminal Justice units! We have over 200 volunteers, a generous benefactor and donors, and a tireless board. We mail CDs instead of tapes. We have our third annual report, produced by Nancy Phillips and Lyrica Johnson, and a strategic plan, guided by Ellen Balthazar. We anticipate our first annual luncheon, under the reins of Lisa Holleran. I have consulted with people in 12 states on how to launch similar programs.

But there is more to do. We continue to seek new volunteers. Three TDCJ units await our program. There are open book parties to host and presentations to give. We still need to hire a new executive director. I look forward to educating others around Texas about WSP. But our focus remains on the children. As one caregiver wrote, “This program has really kept [my granddaughter] connected to her mother and let her know that mommy is in her life and loves her very much. I thank God for all of you who volunteer and the work that you do.”

Thank you, volunteers, donors, and supporters, for everything you have done for WSP and for all the wonderful years you have given.

Fondly,

Judith Dullnig
Founder & Director
Statistics show that more than five million children have had a parent who lived with them sent to jail or prison, and an estimated 2.7 million have a parent behind bars right now. In 2015, over 60% of incarcerated women were mothers with children.

Research shows that children of incarcerated parents are six to eight times more likely to get involved in a criminal lifestyle. These children also are more likely to be subjected to a life of poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, and neglect.

The Case for Connection—The good news is that “maintaining contact with one’s incarcerated parent appears to be one of the most effective ways to improve a child’s emotional response to the incarceration and reduce the incidence of problematic behavior.”

Since 2003, WSP has helped incarcerated mothers to do from afar what moms have always done to comfort and nurture their children—read them bedtime stories, using their own voices to love, reassure, and encourage them. Our program is onto something here—analysis of the brain chemistry of teenaged girls under stress shows that simply hearing the sound of their mother’s voice reduced the levels of the stress hormone cortisol while raising the levels of oxytocin, a hormone that promotes connection and bonding.

Proving the Program—WSP has touched tens of thousands of lives, as affirmed by the stacks of glowing letters we have received over the years from caregivers, children, and moms.

But this evidence is anecdotal; now we aim to prove our work with numbers. In 2016, WSP commissioned a study based on renowned criminologist Travis Hirschi’s benchmark “Social Bond Theory.” According to Hirschi, “Elements of social bonding include attachment to families, commitment to social norms and institutions (school, employment), involvement in activities, and the belief that these things are important.”

We hope to demonstrate that WSP increases connection—and, in turn, bonding—between mother and child, which suggests a decrease in both recidivism of the mother and delinquent behavior of the child. Our evaluation includes pre- and post-tests for women who complete a typical four-month WSP program cycle, and compares the post-test results to a control group that has not participated in WSP. Results will be published on our website this year.

“Thank you so much for the blessing to read to my children. It has made me feel very close to them and them to me. I am very grateful because my daughter and I love to read. I also have a six-year old son who I couldn’t get to read for nothing. Thanks to your program he is an amazing reader and loves to read all the time.” ~ incarcerated mom

2 http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/0001/01/01/collateral-costs.
Thank you for sharing your time, talents, and treasures with WSP.

Financial Supporters

* Support from these entities earned through competitive application process

Genre (> $5,000)
- Ann McEldowney
- Karen & Lawrence Turner
- Lola Wright Foundation
- O’Neill Foundation
- Shield-Ayres Foundation
- St. Matthews Episcopal Church, Austin

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- Anonymous (multiple)
- St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, San Antonio
- Westlake United Methodist Church, Austin

Book ($1,000–$2,999)
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- Judith & Jon Dullnig
- Paula & J. Parker
- Jameson
- Brenda H. Keillor
- Marty Loeber
- Katy Sloan Mitchell
- Lori & Scott Murphy
- Gratitude Fund
- Austin Canyon Corporation
- Austin Pi Beta Phi Foundation
- Justin Paul Foundation
- Oakwood Anesthesia Associates (Dr. Andrew Darnell)
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church, San Antonio

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- AnnMarie Olson, DDS
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- Julie Paynter
- Kristen Silverberg
- Nancy Lea Skelsey
- Nancy Snyder
- Kim Weidmann
- Beta Tau Chapter, Delta Kappa Gamma
- Sutliff & Stout
- Pan American Round Table of Austin
- St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Austin
- Sun City Texas Community Association, Inc.
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- Gail Massad
- Elisa McRimmon
- Betsy & Fernando Medina
- Leland Miller
- Melissa Montgomery
- Wynona Montgomery
- Morris Moore
- Dan Mullis
- Kirsten & Edward Nelson
- Linda A. Noy
- Linda & Louis Pack
- Sharon Ray
- Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Rhodes
Trained Prison Service Volunteers

*Those who served in prison during 2016

Janet Abbey
Donna Abramov
Abimbola Adelakun
Lisa Adewole
Eleanor Albon
Christiane Alexander
Barbara Alfred
Christie Anderson
Megan Aust
Jill Bacon
Jennifer Ballow
Carol Barnwell
Martha Barrick
Marcia Bates
Jillian Beck
Margene Beckham
Karen Beeler
Jackqueline Berner
Davida Bilgrad
Jennifer Blackwell
Victoria Blumhagen
Jean Boehme
Holly Boerner
Kyle Borel
Sue Borel
Ann Broussard
Carol Brown
Georgia Buck
Monika Burgett
Tarah Burris
Jacqueline Callen
Laura Campos
Araceli Capetillo
Linda Carey
Sandra Carey

In-Kind Donors

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Dr. & Mrs. Andy Darnell
Besher Garcia
Darrell Raynor
Barnes & Noble, Sunset Valley
Barnes & Noble, Hill Country Galleria
Book People First United Methodist Church, Joshua
Grace Episcopal Church, Georgetown
St. George’s Episcopal Church Youth Group & Women’s Group, Austin
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, San Antonio
Westlake United Methodist Church, Austin
Sally Barber’s Book Club
Barbara Cox’s Book Club
Dugie Graham’s P.E.O. Club
Pat’Yeargain’s Book Club

Martha Brooks Wynn
Bullet Media Online
Fig Press, LCC
I Live Here, I Give Here ATX
LB Design
Preceptor Delta XI of Beta Sigma Phi
Sarah Davis Illustration
St. Mark’s UMC Women, Baytown
SYM Financial Advisors
Victoria Wing, LPC

Karen & Don Poole
Karen Pope
Joshua Robertson
Peggy Romberg
Debra A. Root
Kara Salmanson
Diana Sanchez-Bushong
Rozenna Sanders
Jeri Saper
Carol & Brad Schlueter
Penny & Robert Schmidt
Catherine Schuelke
Tillman Segal
Lucy Sheffield
Robbi Sherwin-Jordan
Elizabeth Smith
Deborah & Terry Srodawa
Diana & Gregory Stangl
The Steinfort Family
Joellen & Morris Stern
Jan R. Stratton
Jerry Tapley
Kevin B. Taylor
Dr. Cynthia Tays
Ann & Randal Teich
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Mark Williams
Nancy N. Williams
Gay Wood
Gina Woodruff

Bridget Carolan
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Anne Corn
Elena Cox
Linda Cox
Linda A. Cox
Emilie Crimmins
Rachel Cromey
Judith Darnell
Elizabeth Darnell
Clinta Dayton
Keri Dee
Jenny Deen
Judith DeWitt
Jamie Dickens
Emily Dieringer
Carol Dochen
Karen Donovan
Judith Dullnig
DeAnne Duvall
Brenda Dykes
Laura Edge
Susan Eissler
Jessica Escobar
Michelle Feibus
Carrie Finch
Kelly Finkel
Amy Fintel
Shelley Fleishman
Cathy Foster
Judith Fox
Susan Fredine
Robin Fruehe
Ean Fulks
Alice Gallagher
Gratitude

Shannon Gaw
Donna Gelfman
Cheryl Glasgow
Stephanie Glass
Hollie Gordon
Dugie Graham
Patsy Graham
Ilene Gray
Anna Lee Haddox
Ann Harris
Sandra Harrison
Cynthia Hawks
Megan Hedgecock
Kara Helzer
Stella Hendrick
Lydia Hewett
Eileen Hicks
Kelly Hobbs
Lisa Hobbs
Kathryn Hohmann
Shelly Hohmann
Lisa Holleran
Barbara House
Laura Howard
Diane “Penney” Huggins
Janet Ingram
Karen Ingram
Charlotte Jackson
Debra Jackson
Paula Jameson
Karen Jennings
Lyrica Johnson
Madeline Johnson
Gina Kapustin
Pamela Keefe
Brenda Keillor
Ashley Kelly
Marian Kobrin
Nancy Konzen
Berit Kragas
Ronit Kulick
Felicia Kutchey
Sunmin (Amy) Lee
Enid Libster
Clare Losey
Stephanie Lucie
Stephanie Lugo
Caitlin Maher
Jayme Mallindine
Alice Marsel
JoAn Martin
Gail Massad
Sarah Masterson
Allison Matous
Sally McCandless
Katie McCormick
Elizabeth McCraine
Katherine (Katie)
McDanald
Hannah McDermott
Kim McDonald
Melissa McDowell
Karen McMahon
Tracy Meek
Dorothy Metting
Bertha Miller
Jill Miller
Candace Minshaw
Judi Mitchell
Kathryn Mitchell
Erika Mittag
Wynona Montgomery
Carolyn Moreau
Cynthia (Pastor) Moss
Marsha Munoz
Lori Murphy
Frieda Musgrove
Alice Nelson
Patricia Newton
Linda Noy
Angela Nunley
Jill Opella
Carolyn Patrick
Andrea Payne
Tiffani Paynter
Dalayna Perales
Carolyn Perez
Jamie Perrin
Nancy Phillips
Susan Pingchovski
Phyllis Potter
Susan Powell
Joyce Pulich
Julia “Lynne” Riley
Dianne Ripley
Patricia Roberts
Linda Robertson
Susan Robertson
Carol Robinson
Janet Roper
Joan Rothenberg
Ruby Russo
Elizabeth Saldana
Kristin Sample
Diana Sanchez-Bushong
Jeri Saper
Stephanie Savage
Judith Scholes
Heather Schubert
LeAnn Seidenberger
Elora Shannon
Anna Shaw
Rhoda Silverberg
Deena Silverman
Anna Sophia Silverstein
Jennifer Siviter
Susan Slive
Mary Smith
Octavia Smith
Becky Sneed
Nancy Snyder
Becky Spohn
Gina Springer-Shirley
Carol Stansbury
Morgane Starr
Ariel Staton
Kayna Stavast
Marsha Steinback
Kris Stephenson
Sue Stevens
Anna Stewart
Wanda Stimson
Alice Stuart
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Maxine Whitley
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Jorene Williams
Tina Williams
Cynthia Winer
Nancy Witt
Nancy Wolf
Georgia Woods
Claire Wooloff
Elsie Wortham
Pat Yeargain
WSP continues to grow! In 2016, WSP began serving two more Texas women’s prison units. We purchased more laptop computers and recording devices. More volunteers are driving to prisons and using more books, CDs, cases, mailers, and other supplies. The great news is that more children are receiving packages and the opportunity to read along with their mother’s voice in books chosen for them.

More good news for WSP … donations are up! And they more than covered the program’s growth. Cash and book donations in 2016 total $166,045—53% more than in 2015. Our community participation and media exposure raised awareness and dozens of new donors. We now have a part-time staff member dedicated to program evaluation and development.

At $42,300, WSP’s competitive grant awards in 2016 nearly doubled those of 2015, thanks in part to our newly completed strategic plan (see p. 11) and staff focus on grant applications.

As WSP expands, we aim to raise awareness about our program and prove our financial position as a charity deserving of support. For the first time, in 2016, we compared our performance with the evaluation criteria set forth by the nonprofit watchdog group CharityWatch. Our fundraising efficiency—defined as the cost to WSP to raise $100—was $8.56. This earned us an “A” on the CharityWatch evaluation scale for overall nonprofit performance. We earned a “B” on program service expense, which was 68.6% of total expenses per the financial information reported on our 2016 IRS 990. If we account for the value of our 200+ volunteers’ time (7,900 hours valued at $25/hour by the nonprofit group Independent Sector), this figure increases to 77.1%—a CharityWatch “A-.”

We are proud of these ratings and the growth they reflect. We hope to deliver even better news next year!

Our book inventory remained steady in 2016. At year-end, WSP had 13,458 books valued at $140,500.

Moms choose The Invisible String, our signature book.
"Oh my goodness this program is awesome. Awesome, awesome, awesome!" ~ caregiver

Did you know? Women’s Storybook Project is a simple idea with a big impact … AND a lot of moving parts!

Here’s some of what goes into every prison visit … all for just $48 per book:

**Before**
- Books are donated/sorted/packaged/delivered
- Recording equipment/mailing supplies are purchased/prepared
- Volunteers are recruited/trained/scheduled
- Transportation for teams/supplies is arranged
- Team leaders coordinate visit details with wardens
- Wardens select incarcerated moms to participate based on good behavior (12–25 moms per session)

**During**
- Teams drive about two hours with equipment/supplies to a prison unit (8–10 members per team, 8 units per month)
- Teams/equipment/supplies are cleared through prison security
- Moms choose books/read out loud to recording volunteers
- Moms inscribe books, CDs, and cases for children while laptop volunteers transfer recordings to CDs
- Books/CDs are packaged/addressed

**After**
- Team leaders mail packages to caregivers
- Children receive packages and read along while hearing mom’s voice
- **Connections are made**

“I don’t get to see my mom much so her reading to me means the world to me. I can’t wait until she sends me another book. Thank you for helping us to spend time together.” ~ child
Nothing can compare with this wonderful project. Just to see my grandchildren’s eyes light up, the smile on their faces ... this is such a blessing for my grandchildren. [The stories] came to us like showers of blessings. ... Thank you, Thank you.” ~ caregiver

Mission Moment

Breanne, a mom incarcerated at the Hilltop Unit in Gatesville, read to all three of her children during her first experience with WSP in August 2016. Her one-year-old daughter received a book and recording in the mail one day before a final court hearing in which Breanne’s parental rights were expected to be terminated—which would in turn pave the way for the baby to be put up for adoption. Breanne’s daughter’s caretaker, her sister, took the book to Breanne’s lawyer, who presented it as part of the case. The book Breanne had chosen to read to her daughter was Wherever you Are, My Love Will Find You, by Nancy Tillmann. Both the attorney and the judge became emotional as they read the message Breanne had written inside the cover of the book about her love for her baby girl. This, along with other self-improvement efforts Breanne has made, led the judge to decide NOT to terminate her parental rights. Not only was the baby not put up for adoption; but the no-visitation order in place was lifted, and Breanne was actually granted permission to see her daughter in January 2017 for the first time since giving birth to her in October 2015. According to Breanne, the book and her heartfelt note to her baby had a “very big impact on how I was seen as a mother. I want to thank everybody in the Storybook Program for giving me a chance to stay connected to my children.”

Volunteer Thoughts

“I was very surprised at how simple and fun it was ... The messages the moms left for their children on the recordings really struck me as the essence of WSP. The stories are two-dimensional, the sensory input of words and the imagination interpreting the words, but the mother’s love is a third dimension that only her children can enter.” ~ first-time volunteer
In 2016, WSP finalized our first-ever strategic plan. Our mission has always been clear; but this process was helpful in clarifying our vision, our strategic objective, and the key goals and supporting strategies we believe will move us from “here” to “there.” This plan will help guide and focus our planning and decision-making in 2017 and beyond, and will be reviewed annually and revised as needed.

**Mission:** To connect children with their incarcerated mothers through the joy of literature.

**Vision:** To become the national model for Storybook-type programs across the U.S.

**Strategic Objective:** To expand the WSP program to all applicable women’s prisons in Texas by 2020.

**Key Goals/Supporting Strategies:**

*indicates higher priority

1) Build organizational capacity to sustain high quality services and support growth
   
   - a) Hire a full-time, paid executive director
   - b) Review and coordinate staffing needs (paid and volunteer)
   - c) Expand/develop the board through strategic recruitment
   - d) Optimize the WSP volunteer experience and capacity
   - e) Review and improve all processes based on best practices for non-profit organizations (including evolving technologies)

2) Develop specific growth plans to implement WSP in additional units
   
   - a) Build strong relationships with TDCJ personnel in non-served units
   - b) Negotiate expansion agreements and timetables
   - c) Develop internal resource plans and implementation schedules for expansion into new units

3) Demonstrate measurable impact of our services
   
   - a) Establish continuous feedback loops for program improvement and quality control
   - b) Implement a mother-child bonding/attachment research study
   - c) Plan research on the impact of WSP on inmate self-esteem
   - d) Evaluate feasibility of long-term recidivism study

4) Generate sustainable revenue streams
   
   - a) Create and implement a strategic development plan, including an aggressive grants program
   - b) Build statewide awareness and development opportunities
Proud Participants: Mothers find joy, community, and connection with their children in this program.