

# Book Notes



## PROGRAMS

Women's Storybook welcomes **interim executive director**, Bergan Casey who consulted for WSP on branding and development a few years ago. She also has a background in communications and public policy.



Bergan Casey and Judith Dullnig

Big shout out to three volunteers -- **Emily Dieringer on laptop**, and **Mary Smith and Janet Nash** (new), who recorded 37 books at Woodman unit on a January. Janet is new to WSP but jumped right in. Thank you!

Our newest unit, **Hobby** launched in October. Eight mothers already completed the fourth session in January. Co-team leaders Vickie Blumhagen and Crystal Wade presented certificates to the group. [They would like to entice more volunteers and guarantee you'll love the lunch spot in Lott!](#)

WSP is looking for ways to **engage the mothers** during that awkward span of time after they record their books and before volunteers host closing circle. One idea is to invite mothers to give book reviews of their favorite books. Please send us your ideas for meaningful engagement and we'll consider piloting those in different units.

## EVENTS

### OPEN BOOK PARTY

Is your book or bunko club meeting next month? Think about inviting Judith to give a quick talk about WSP, and collect donated books or sign up volunteers. No hard sell. Only fun company and fuzzy feelies.



Open Book Party hosted by Patricia Newton

**Tables Hosts needed for WSP's 2nd annual luncheon** at Austin Country Club, scheduled for April 26. Invite friends who you think would like to learn more about volunteer and donation opportunities. To learn how to serve as Table Host, please call our office or email Bergan at [info@storybookproject.org](mailto:info@storybookproject.org).

## DONATIONS

The **2017 Annual Fund** raised \$13,000. Thank you to our contributors \$500+: [Rose Roberts](#), [the Silverberg](#), [Bonner](#) and [Murphy](#) families.



2017 Barnes and Noble Book Drive

The annual **Holiday Book Drive** at

**Barnes & Noble** in Sunset Valley was extremely generous to WSP Volunteers decorated a donation table and promoted our mission. This year alone the sale raised a whopping **752 much-needed board and Little Golden books valued at more than \$4,500**. Special thanks to Emilie Crimmins for coordinating the book drive.

We received about 30 books donated by **St. Matthew's Third Monday Book Club** and individual donations from Jane Michael and Jill Bacon.

WSP is proud to accept the following **grants** in the second half of 2017 from [the Austin Pi Beta Phi Foundation](#), [The Trull Foundation](#), [ECG Foundation](#), [Lola Wright Foundation](#), [St. Luke's Episcopal Church](#) and [Shield-Ayres Foundation](#). We have made progress in securing grants but would like to hear suggestions about corporate or family foundations you would like us to contact.

## VOLUNTEERS

WSP has many **volunteer needs** over the next few months. In addition to our regular needs for book sorting and prison visits, we are moving offices! Please think about how you, spouse, child, neighbor or work colleagues can help.

- [Graphic designer \(5-10 hours/quarter\)](#)
- [Sort and pack books](#)
- [Pack and unpack office](#)
- [Haul away old electronics](#)

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Jamie Dickens with mother, Susan Pekoe

I began reading books at three years of age in large part because my mother, a 7th grade teacher, recorded herself reading all my favorite books on cassette tapes. I loved being read to and I could operate a tape recorder and follow her instructions to turn the page at the sound of the ringing bell.

The first time I sat down as a Women's Storybook Project volunteer inside the Lane Murray Unit in Gatesville, my memory of the ringing bell, and my mother's voice reading me my favorite stories, brought surprisingly quick tears to my eyes.

Initially, the idea of going inside a prison to help offenders was a bit intimidating, and more than a little scary. The fear I had about the prison, the women, and my own ability vanished as soon as I helped my first mother record the book, "I Love You Forever," to her 4 year old daughter. When she closed the book

and said, "I love you forever baby, be a good girl, and be strong, Mama will be home soon." I choked back a sob. Since that first visit I have volunteered inside a prison once a month, and I look forward to the privilege of helping build the bond between mother and child during the most difficult of circumstances.

On a particular visit when asked if they had received any feedback from their children, one mom quietly raised her hand and smiled. She said her 4 year old wasn't really understanding what it was yet. However, her 16-year-old daughter had the CD and was listening to it every morning as she got ready for school. *Jamie Dickens & her mom, Susan Pekoe, have been volunteers since 2016. Jamie and her company PrintGlobe have donated printed materials and swag for WSP.*

## COMING UP



### Amplify Austin

March 1-2 marks our 4th year to participate in Amplify Austin to leverage donations from current and new donors. For convenience you can schedule your donation ahead of time. Look for our email blasts. We encourage every volunteer to forward them to 4-5 of their friends encouraging them to donate. It's the only time of the year when we publically ask for support – please help spread the message!

*Prison volunteers, remember to sign up through our website so we can add you to your database and give you correct info on TDCJ trainings.*

*"Thank you for carrying our voices to our children." - mother at Lane Murray unit*

*"I'm so grateful for this great opportunity. It has deepened my bond with my son even though I'm incarcerated. It lets him know that my love is ever-present and unchangeable." - letter from mother at Hobby*

*Reminder: No leggings or tight fitting clothes allowed in the units.*

**New office address beginning March 1:**

5524 Bee Caves Road  
Austin, TX 78746  
512-861-5110



I just wanted to take a moment to write and say "thank you " for the work that you do. My son was adopted out of foster care at 17 months old, and has not seen his birth mother since he was taken into State's custody at 2 months old. I recently began writing to his birth mother when I located her in Gatesville, and I had no idea what to expect. I was so surprised and thrilled when I received a package for my son that contained the book "Guess How Much I Love You" and the CD of his birth mother's voice reading to him. I have no idea what the future will hold. My son's birth mother may never be able to overcome her addictions or heal to the point where she can have a healthy, ongoing relationship with him, but as of today my son will be able to hear the voice of his first mummy telling him that he "is more loved than he will ever know." For that, I am forever thankful.

The work that you and your volunteers put into this amazing project touches the hearts of so many people, and I wanted you to know that it doesn't go unnoticed. Thank you for giving my son the chance to have a connection to his first mom that he might not otherwise have had.

