

La Marque



Photos by Stuart Villanueva/The Daily News Kathy Goodwin has been organizing a book club and Little Library in her La Marque neighborhood.

"My passion for books, as well as the need to have June remembered, is what gave life to the library, the book club and the good we try to do."

Kathy Goodwin

LITTLE Library

Book exchange helps foster community

By RICK COUSINS
Correspondent

The times are, of course, changing. Brick and mortar libraries are fading nationally as e-books are seen as more convenient than stacks of bound books. DVDs are less prevalent as streaming services provide movies on demand. And interactive, mobile games captivate the next generation while traditional boxed, board game sales languish.

Still, there's a lot to be said for a real, physical book. Especially when it comes without cost or fines or might, just might, even have a dollar inside.

There have been huge libraries throughout history, from the vast collection of parchments in ancient Alexandria to the many Carnegie libraries, generally heralded by regal, concrete lions, which abounded around the United States. But we're going

small and sustainable. A lot smaller.

Paul Ray Heinrich of La Marque spoke of his neighborhood library. There are no fines, no user cards, no computers, but there is an ample selection of free books housed in a small structure.

"Kathy Goodwin started a little library in 2010 here in Borondo Pines in La Marque," Heinrich said. "It's a 'Take a book, leave a book' kind of place."

The tiny library has a traveling sister set of books, one that visits local nursing homes and assisted-living centers. The two have spawned a book club that meets in the Goodwin house.

So just how big is this little library? No one knows.

"It's difficult to put a number on how many books are in the library at any given time," Goodwin said. "Every day, old books are checked out and new



Allison Poole reads to her 7-month-old son Aiden at Kathy Goodwin's La Marque home.



Kathy Goodwin displays the guest book that people sign at the little library in front of her La Marque home.

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LEFT: Mia Franco, 9, selects a book from the children's section of Kathy Goodwin's Little Library. RIGHT: Book club member Donna Heinrich (left) listens as Kathy Goodwin speaks about the club.

LIBRARY

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ones take their place. Every month I change the books to reflect the season we are in. In the fall, I put out lots of fall recipe books and magazines as well as lots of horror and Halloween novels. At Christmas I put out all sorts of Christmas-feel-good books, magazines, recipe books and, of course, all the traditional Christmas stories.”

For the more technically-oriented, Goodwin’s closet library has computer programming for dummies, books on how to get out of debt, hobby guides, gardening books and even some children’s books in Spanish. Plus, folks have donated spy novels, political espionage and thrillers. Surprisingly, there are few romance novels in circulation at the June Goodwin Memorial Little Free Library.

There are autographed books by Kevin Kwan, Andy Upchurch, Susan Baker, Ella Frank and Gloria Lyons in the collection.

All in all, it’s a labor of love, not only for Goodwin, but for the larger neighborhood and community.

“My friend Diane Doslich is a schoolteacher,” Goodwin said. “Each summer the teachers she works with donate all their old children’s books to our library. I just received a huge box of fabulous books for kids elementary age through junior high school.

“Sometimes I come home and there is a bag of books on the porch or new books in the library from anonymous angels. It always makes me so happy when I find these gifts. I also buy a lot of books at library book sales and garage sales.”

So what’s hot among the youth who could be reading Kindles this summer instead? The most requested teen books include the Baby-Sitters Club series.



Photos by Stuart Villanueva/The Daily News

Kathy Goodwin uses a suggestion box to determine which book her book club will read next.



Books rest in Goodwin’s Little Library.

Goodwin isn’t letting literacy end with her neighbors and shut-ins, she’s also including the homeless in her broader mission.

“I generally have a tote bag of books and snacks in my car,” she said. “I may even tuck a dollar in a book, and when I come across someone homeless or down on their luck, I will tell them about this great book and say you might just like it and give them a bottle of water or snack to go with it. I have had these folks tell me that I am one of the few people who treats them like humans. It tugs at my heart but my reward is knowing I did something good that day.”

For those who resonate with such generos-

ity, Goodwin will offer classes by request on how to launch your own free library. She also has duplicate titles of a number of popular books that can be used to seed such an effort.

The library’s name has a story too.

“I started this as a memorial to my mother-in-law June Goodwin,” she said. “She was an avid reader, world traveler and supporter of her local library. She would recommend books to me often and we would discuss them over the phone. Books were our connection; Books were the special thing in our relationship.”

The younger Goodwin also was bound to books as a library aide at Burnet Elementary School.

“My passion for books, as well as the need to have June remembered, is what gave life to the library, the book club and the good we try to do,” Goodwin said.

The library is located at 56 Borondo Pines in La Marque and can be contacted through Facebook.

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