



Susan Phillips Helps Youngsters Discover Buried Treasure

BY SUSAN USHER

The late Walt Disney once said, "There is more treasure in books than in all the pirates' loot on Treasure Island...and best of all, you can enjoy these riches every day of your life."

It's a sentiment Susan Phillips would embrace heartily. After all, she's sort of a Captain Hook when it comes to books.

As the new children's services coordinator for the Brunswick County Public Library, she sees her main role as getting youngsters hooked on reading, excited about the doors it opens for a lifetime.

"If they're lonely, it's a friend; if they're bored, it's something to do...and it's a way for them to find out that they're not the only person who has felt this way or had this experience happen to them," she said.

As a young adult she snubbed a childhood favorite, the Nancy Drew mystery series, but changed her mind after rearing a family.

"I see a purpose in reading them now that I didn't see then," she reflected. "Children can read them and gain a sense of security. They know Nancy and her friends are going to be all right in the end; they always work it out. Children don't have to worry about what happens or jump to the end to see. They can just work through the puzzle with the characters."

Along with science fiction and poetry, the classics such as *The Wind In The Willows* number among Mrs. Phillips favorites, books she is eager to share with children.

"I want them to look at books as entertainment, an alternative to television—though I have nothing against television except in large doses," said Mrs. Phillips, a mother, grandmother and former school volunteer who readily admits to being hooked on books herself. Isaac Asimov is her favorite author, Shel Silverstein among her favorite poets.

"When you watch something on television you see it with your eyes," she continued. "When you read, you see it with your mind. I really want to see children use their minds, use their imaginations; I don't think they do that with television."

Mrs. Phillips lives in Long Beach with her husband, Jeff, who commutes to work in Wilmington, and their

son, Nathan, a second grade student. Their two older children no longer live at home, Jeremy, 21, and Bonnie, 24.

Both Mrs. Phillips and her husband are natives of Wilmington, but had resided in Sanford until returning to the area a few years ago.

For two years, Mrs. Phillips had worked as a volun-

teer and substitute teacher at Southport Elementary School, storytelling and reading in classrooms, shelving books and helping students in the library.

She was quick to tell him that the day before she had been on a moon of Jupiter—in a book, of course.

Not long after she saw him in the library, she said. He was checking out a book.

Mrs. Phillips was ready to return to her volunteer work at school this fall, but instead found herself successor to Felecia Hardy, who is now in charge of the

Her duties include coordinating services for children of all ages, preschool through high school, as well as assisting at the Shallotte and Leland branches.

Children's programming includes coordinating the Brunswick County Quiz Bowl, a cooperative venture with the Brunswick County Schools and the State Library. The local "college bowl" type contest will be held Dec. 7, with the winning high school advancing to regional competition in Pender County.

However, preschool story hours may be the most visible and best-loved of children's programs offered through the library. At 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Tuesdays, youngsters gather in the Rourke children's room at the Shallotte library for 45 minutes of fun. Thursdays a large group of youngsters come from The Kid's Connection for a story hour. Similar programs are offered Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at Southport and 10:30 a.m. Fridays at Leland.

"We build each program around a theme," explained Mrs. Phillips, a loose framework around which to shape activities.

During a recent program on spiders, for example, an illustrated singalong about an old woman who swallowed a spider (along with a lot of other things) helped bridge the way to a story about Gregory, a kid goat that was a very fussy eater. Themes for upcoming programs include turtles, mice, houses, cats and dogs, in the middle and the sun, as well as spaghetti.

"My favorite," she exclaimed in a soft, lilting voice as she described a program that incorporated the popular Silverstein poem as well as a spaghetti "cake".

Her grab bag of tools draws on her musical background, as well as storytelling, poetry, movement, use of a flannel board, crafts and other activities aimed at engaging young minds creatively.

Bulletin boards in the children's room generally are built around a poem, on purpose.

"I think in terms of poems. I hope the children will learn to enjoy poetry," she said.

She's convinced a parent cannot begin reading to a child too early.

"Mothers set the example in the home," said Mrs. Phillips. "I've seen it. The homes where books are important, the children can read and they do better."



SUSAN PHILLIPS relates a tale about Gregory, a goat who was a fussy eater, during a storyhour for preschoolers at the West Brunswick Branch Library in Shallotte.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

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