



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“We put people on jeeps and horseback and on dugout canoes sometimes. We have a clause in our application form that says you will be subject to riots and wild animals and insects and disease, etc. etc. You jump over the occasional snake. But you don’t worry about it. It’s not a problem in what we do. And we haven’t yet lost any volunteers...Touch wood.”

-Stan Brock, of Remote Area Medical; October 2004 interview

Last October, when I was in Knoxville, Tennessee, I read an article about Stan Brock in the local “Metro Pulse” newspaper. Some of you may remember him from the weekly wildlife television series “Wild Kingdom,” which was, according to the website I went to, “the most popular weekly wildlife series ever broadcast on public television.”

The article was by Mike Gibson and was called “Wild Kingdom legend and former ranch hand Stan Brock brings medical relief to indigent peoples the world over.” It described Mr. Brock, his past, which he refers to as the “Frivolous Years” and his current work, which is a life dedicated to an organization called “Remote Area Medical (RAM).” I was impressed by what I read and when I got home, I went to the RAM website to read more about it. I found out that they provide free health care, dental care, eye care, veterinary services, and

technical and educational assistance to people in remote areas of the United States and the world. At all-day medical clinics, people start lining up early in the morning and wait for hours to get on-the-spot glasses, inoculations, dental work and other valuable and much-needed services. RAM sees more than 4,000 dental patients, 4,800 animals, 5,400 vision patients and 7,700 medical patients annually.

Besides the statistics, I was struck by the many photographs on the website, many of which included children. I was reminded of my ongoing interest in providing free brand-new books to children. Would these medical clinics, held in rural Tennessee and Virginia, be good places to do this? I wondered. I emailed Mr. Brock and asked him. Sure, he emailed me back, that would be good.

I am telling you this because on Saturday, July 17, from 2 to 5 p.m., in the Edith

Stone Room at the Albany Library, there will be a fundraiser for these books. This event, sponsored by the Friends of the Albany Library, is a Chocolate Chip Cookie Tasting, which means that for \$5 for individuals and \$7 for families, you can come and taste as many as thirty different chocolate chip cookies. And while you are tasting them, you can also vote for your favorite one in each of three categories, and help to decide which ones will get prizes. Or, if you have a favorite, potentially award-winning recipe, you can enter this contest by picking up an entry form at the Albany Library.

There will also be new children's books at the tasting, ready to be sponsored by anyone who would like to do that. These books will have bookplates in the front, so the child who receives the book can see who donated it.

There are probably many reasons why I am moved by the idea of putting new books in the hands of children. Partly, it is the pleasure and company I have always found in books. But perhaps most of all, it is the stories I heard from my mother, who grew up in the rural south. Her family owned few books – none specifically for children – and that always seemed sad to me, since I grew up surrounded by them. So, if I were dedicating this fundraiser, I would say: To my mother, who knew the value of a book.