



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“The RAM Katrina disaster care airlift was launched Sunday morning, September 4...the aircraft’s 3000-pound payload consisted of medicine, water and a variety of supplies, from diapers to generators.”

-Remote Area Medical (RAM) website,
www.ramusa.org

On October 1 and 2, I again went to Grundy, Virginia, to distribute new books to the people who attended the Remote Area Medical (RAM) two-day free medical clinic. Last year was the first time I did this, and my goal then was to provide each child who came with a brand-new hardback book. This was accomplished and I learned a lot about giving away books.

First, last year I didn’t take enough books for the teenagers and the adults – so, this year I gave out about 40 paperback books. These ranged from Danielle Steel to Ken Follett, Douglas Adams and Michael Crichton. Last year I was determined to only offer hardbacks for the children, but this meant I didn’t have any of the popular series books for the younger readers and I didn’t have a very good selection of books for fifth to eighth graders. This year, with help from many of my fellow library school students, I had a

wonderful selection for those middle years. I still had lots of hardback picture books, but there were some paperback ones, too. I guess you could say I became more practical and therefore the choices were much better and highly appreciated by those who took home books.

Some of the beautiful hardback books came from surprising sources. When I visited a library school professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, he handed me a tall stack of new children’s books for my project. And one of my library school professors sent me a box of about 30 books, after I made a brief announcement in one of my classes.

I also came prepared with more craft materials and a portable photo printer for my digital camera. This turned out to be quite a hit, as I printed out photograph after photograph of children with new books or with their finished craft project.

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I think what I like most about this event is the ongoing book discussions. Each person – child or adult – who approached the table would engage in some sort of book conversation. Some would be short – “I love mysteries” or “I have a two-year-old and a five-year-old.” But others could go on for an hour. Two boys who pretty much hung around all day had read widely and we compared our favorite children’s books – recommending, commenting, and unabashedly telling the entire plots.

As we talked I realized how much I’ve read since I became a children’s librarian last November – and how differently I approached these interactions than last year. This time I had actually read *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Holes*, *June B. Jones*, and *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* – one of my favorite children’s books. Last

year, I had to rely on the books I read to my children or even the ones I had read to my younger brothers. I felt like a real children’s librarian, with the breadth and depth that can only come from reading, reading, reading.

The final day was slow and gave me a chance to talk to the staff and even to Stan Brock – the founder of RAM. He had been there all weekend, courteously and respectfully funneling people into the building from the long line waiting outside. He is already making plans for RAM to return to New Orleans – after being there for several weeks in September – and he invited me to take my book project there. I have to admit I’m giving it some thought.