

Purcell earns MSC Lifer Award



Examiner photo by Matthew Ybarra
 Laura Cherry Purcell was presented the "Lifer's Award" by the Music Study Club of Navasota, the Texas Federation of Music Clubs, and the National Federation of Music Clubs. She is being honored for her faithful dedication to the promotion of music in the community, state and nation. She was honored with a ceremony at Navasota City Hall Friday, Aug. 14. Pictured front row left to right: Carolee Botkin, Officer Robert Ghanem, Laura Cherry Purcell, Cynthia Todd, Joyce Jackson, Marilyn Bettes. Back row: Gerald Purcell, Carol Gessner and Jeanette Tanski.

Bedias Library mobile delivery meets children's reading needs

BY CONNIE CLEMENTS
 Examiner reporter

The Bedias Library and Museum celebrated its 10th anniversary October 2019. Defying the odds and functioning on a shoestring budget, the library is one of few its size still operating.

Pre-Covid-19, it was open three afternoons a week and offered a children's story and craft time, science experiments, ice cream socials to wrap up the summer reading programs and adults could learn computer skills.

Bedias Librarian Karen Shiver said when Covid "shut down the world," the schools closed without notice with many children on spring break who didn't have the opportunity to get their textbooks. In response, she took the library to the local Dollar General parking lot and gave away 145 books in five hours, and soon Shiver was delivering giveaway books directly to the doorsteps of Grimes County children.

4,197 giveaways

Shiver's enthusiasm and commitment to reading is exceeded only by her credentials. She taught prekindergarten, and first and second grades before becoming



Examiner photos by Connie Clements
 Librarian Karen Shiver displays a teenage giveaway pack consisting of used and new books purchased with money from donations.

a Reading Interventionist and has a master's degree in Library and Information Science with Certificates in Children's Librarianship, Public Librarianship and Storytelling.

As a "weekender," Shiver volunteered her Saturdays at the library until 2017 when she retired after

27 years with the Alief Independent School District and became a fulltime resident.

Her passion for book giveaways began during her first year as a librarian at a school with approximately 1,200 students, of which 800 didn't have money to buy a book at the Book Fair.

She said, "I started with stuff I owned and put it in a box under the table. If you showed up with whatever spare change you dug out of the couch, you could buy a book. I didn't care if it was three pennies or a quarter... and every kid went home with a book."

When Covid-19 shut the Bedias Library's doors in March, Shiver took her giveaway idea mobile. Her twice-monthly delivery area includes 45-46 families in Bedias, Iola, Shiro, Singleton, North Zulch, Madisonville and the back roads of Grimes County to the Walker County line. Her giveaway bags, one for each child in the family, include a mix of fiction, nonfiction, science, social studies, religion and 4,197 books have been given away since March. Shiver also provides diverse biographies and multicultural books as well as Spanish books for bilingual children.

She said, "I miss the interaction at the library but one thing I've discovered as I'm driving 150 miles roundtrip to deliver books, there are a lot of people who can't get to the library and a lot of kids live in homes without reliable transportation or the transportation is with the person at work."

Rural libraries in crisis

One might describe the library's 14,435 media inventory as one giant love offering. According to Shiver, every new and used book, DVD, CD, and audio book has been donated and that includes most of the shelving and all of the computers. The library has many book benefactors from Bedias and surrounding communities such as the Cactus Trading Post, Dave Woodruff, Allen Academy, former teachers, and folks who wish to remain anonymous. They've provided current and popular reading materials, even paying the fee to be a Little Free Library which is located on the porch. Loyal library patrons are quick to donate a book missing from a series.

Of the donated items, books that are good for the library stay with the library while others become part of the giveaway program.

With only a small group of volunteers, there hasn't been a major fundraiser in several years and the library's only funding source has been \$5,000 annually from Grimes County Commissioners Court.

Shiver said, "We report to the state library system but every year they've increased the financial requirement to be an accredited library. For serving Grimes County, I believe they require us to have \$15,000 in guaranteed income. At this stage of the game, we'll not be an accredited library, but we are listed as a public library."

She continued, "That means we're not eligible for the really inexpensive databases that accredited libraries can get. It's like you're too poor to get the financial help that's part of the state library system."

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In the absence of a place to rent movies, the Bedias Library accepts DVD donations. The library's 1,161 DVDs include popular favorites and classics.

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