



Lenbrook

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July 28, 2021

One person's favorite page-turner can be another's treasure — especially if the book is a Western and the recipient is behind bars.

That's what residents of the upscale Buckhead senior living community Lenbrook have learned in the nearly two years that they've been dusting off and packing up books for delivery to the Georgia prison system.

To a community of avid book readers, that just didn't seem right. And so residents of Lenbrook began gathering books for the state's prisons.

They dug into their own book collections and welcomed donations from soon-to-be residents who didn't want to — or couldn't — bring their own libraries with them. Organizers also threw in leftovers from the community's semi-annual book sales.

They even culled out books from Lenbrook's own impressive 4,000-book library and added them to the donation pile. Some were duplicates, and others were cleared out to make room for the five new books that Lenbrook's library committee buys each month for the community.

Recently, the prison system dispatched a truck to Lenbrook to pick up the community's latest

contribution — 800 books.

A big thank-you followed.

“As usual, the variety of genres included in the donation was amazing,” Medeana Hinson, director of library services for the Georgia Department of Corrections, wrote Lenbrook residents. “As I unpacked and shelved the books in our donation center, I was excited to be able to fill many requests from our prison libraries. We were especially excited to find several Westerns — our most requested genre.”

Babette Rothschild, a Lenbrook resident who is in charge of the community’s library, said residents have been only too happy to make the book donations.

“We’re so glad we have someone who appreciates reading them,” Rothschild said. “There are really some wonderful books. We just have too many of them.”

Hinson said all of Georgia’s prisons have libraries, although the size varies with the size of the facility.

The prison system relies heavily on donations, mostly from individuals, to satisfy inmates’ desire for more reading material, she said.

The recent supply from Lenbrook was a “very large donation,” Hinson said.

The DOC has received other big donations on occasion and is in discussions with “Freedom Reads,” formerly the “Million Book Project,” about a potential partnership that could provide more opportunities and reading resources for inmates, she said.

For centuries, correction officials and researchers have touted the benefits of giving prisoners access to the written word. Not only does reading help improve an inmate’s vocabulary and literacy skills, but a 2012 Rand Corporation study found it helped to reduce the recidivism rate by as much as 40%.

The government of Brazil was so convinced of the potential impact of reading on inmates that it launched a program in 2012 called “Redemption through Reading” that allows inmates to shave four days off their sentence for every book read, up to a maximum of 48 days per year. The Italian region of Calabria adopted a similar policy in 2014.

Lenbrook’s Rothchild — an avid reader of biographies and historical novels — said she hopes Georgia prisoners will benefit from her community’s book donations.

“If they’re in a prison cell with nothing to do, it’s wonderful if they have a good book to read,” she said.

To find out how to help, contact the Georgia Department of Corrections.

A book donation center is located in Milledgeville in the Arnall Building at 2271 Vinson Highway. Donations also can be mailed to: Director of Library Services Attn: Medeana Hinson 2271 Vinson

Highway, Arnall Building Milledgeville, GA 31061

On reading and books

“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.” – Walt Disney, a pioneer in animation

“Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him.” ? Maya Angelou, writer, editor, essayist, playwright, and poet

“I don’t believe in the kind of magic in my books. But I do believe something very magical can happen when you read a good book.” ? J.K. Rowling, author of the beloved author of series of Harry Potter novels

“All I have learned, I learned from books.” ? Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States

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