

KEYS Partnership with SAREads

By Jane Warren

Pat McCleary, Director of Older Adult Ministry at First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio and I, as co-president of the KEYS group (Keeping Everyone Young in Spirit) wanted our ministry to have a specific service project and SAREads came to our attention.

SAREads is a division of Literacy San Antonio, whose mission is to bring all San Antonio children up to grade-level reading by third grade. To implement this they partner with schools, libraries, after-school programs, as well as retailers like Barnes and Noble and Half Price Books to hold book drives which collect large numbers of books.

In the case of Barnes and Noble, they have held a Christmas holiday book drive in which they asked customers to add one children's book to their purchase which would be donated to SAREads. In 2013 that effort provided over 7500 new books, and their goal for this season is 10,000!

The objective is to get the books into the hands of young children who do not have books in the home. Experience shows that children who do not have the exposure to books in the home, or see parents reading regularly are much slower to develop strong reading habits. So, SAREads is responding to needy schools and after-school programs by supplying books that the children may take home, as well as supplemental reading for the classroom. They need assistance in preparing these books for distribution.

This is where the KEYS fit in. In seeking a project that would be of interest to older adults and also be inclusive of those with mobility limitations, SAREads was a perfect choice. The work includes labeling, cleaning/mending older books and sorting and packaging by age or reading level. We created considerable promotional material for church newsletters, Sunday bulletins and posters encouraging, not only our immediate KEYS members, but any church members who were interested in spending two Tuesday mornings a month helping us. It is an extremely pleasant few hours working around a big table, enjoying each other's company in fellowship while providing a needed service benefiting young San Antonio kids. This ministry has been a blessing to many youngsters, as well as a pleasure for those who have participated in the book preparation.

Jane Warren has been a very active member of First Presbyterian Church since she and her husband, Spence, arrived in San Antonio 15 years ago. She has served as a Deacon, an officer of KEYS Adults, Sanctuary Choir, Literature and Bible study Circles, and is a regular participant in the Loaves and Fishes Ministry – serving monthly dinners to less fortunate members of the community. Originally from Kansas City, MO, she and her husband have lived all over the United States. They had two sons and have four grandchildren. As a widow now, Jane's passions include music, reading and serving in whatever capacity is most needed.