

Passing Along Her Passion for Reading

St. Clair Librarian Loves Her Job

By Keith E. Domke

Karen Fogelbach is a self-proclaimed bookworm. But because she is the librarian at the St. Clair Scenic Regional library, she just about has to be one.

The 61-year-old Fogelbach, who has worked in St. Clair since the early part of the 21st century, said she reads about 100 books a year, "and that's not including all the children's books I read."

Some of her reading provides a screening process for the library to see if she wants a book to be included in the collection.

"I screen almost everything that comes in," she said. "That's part of my job. I make sure I want the book to be here before I include it."

Fogelbach reads so much that she said the television in her home rarely is turned on.

"I read rather than watch TV," she said. "You'll find me with a book whenever possible."

Fogelbach said her passion for reading started at an early age, but it was not something she always enjoyed.

"I didn't start that way (being a reader)," she said. "I struggled with reading in first and second grade. My mom got me a special tutor to help me, and that opened up a whole new world I didn't know existed.

"I've been hooked ever since." And that love for reading is

something she tries to pass along to others, especially the younger children she sees. She said she also regularly read to her own five children when they were young.

"Children are the backbone of every library," Fogelbach said. "If children don't come when they're young, why would they come when they're adults? That's just the way it is.

"I love to read, and I want to pass that along to everyone, especially the little guys. And I hope that they then pass it along to others.

"I'm more than willing to get down on the floor and help a child get what they need. Their teacher says they have to have a book about something, and they have no idea. So, I try to find them some choices. It seems to work. There are some kids who came in here when they were younger who still come in as preteens or teenagers."

But, the assistance doesn't stop with the younger patrons.

"I also try to do the same thing with adults. If they ask, I try to find them something I think they will like."

Fogelbach said she treasures what she does for a living and looks forward to it every day.

"I wouldn't trade my job for anything," she said while sitting in the St. Clair library's story hour room. "I love coming to work. I

don't think I'll ever want to retire."

She said she qualifies for retirement at age 67, but at this time she has no plans to quit.

"I may someday cut back to part time," she said. "But I have no plans to leave. I love what I do too much."

Fogelbach's trademark is her Thursday afternoon preschool story hour. During that time, she reads special books to preschoolers or invites special guests to entertain the children. A pair of recent visitors have been Chris McBrien, the Magic Storyteller, and Martha, the talking dog.

"I've been doing that story hour for preschoolers since I've been here," she said. "When I started working here, I had to establish

my own programs. This was one I started right away, and it's turned out to be my favorite."

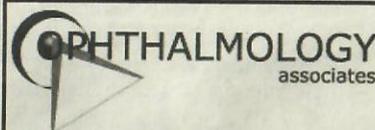
And through the years, she has been known simply as "Miss Karen."

"The preschoolers just couldn't get the last name," she said. "Fogelbach? Yeah, right. So they started calling me Miss Karen, and it stuck."

Background

Fogelbach did not have a library background when she was hired to be the local librarian. Her career was substitute teaching, and she did that in the Union school district for years.

However, she was asked to be the librarian at Union Middle School in 2001, and she decided to



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take the job.

"I didn't have a librarian degree or any experience being a librarian, but they needed one," she said. "That was my first experience with a library. I just had to teach myself how to do it."

A couple of years later, the St. Clair librarian position opened, and Fogelbach was hired.

"I was very excited to come here," she said. "There were two experienced people already working here part time, so that helped me a lot. They knew where things were and how things ran."

"But the whole building was turned over to me. I made some changes, but people helped me. I learned a lot and grew into the position. I tried to improve on what was already here."

And it was one of the best decisions she ever made.

"For me, yeah, it was the right thing to do," Fogelbach said. "I enjoyed substitute teaching, but this turned out to be my niche. I wish I could have started sooner."

"It's certainly not a money-making job, but if you like what you're doing, that means a lot. If you're happy in your job, everything else is a little easier. And I love my job."

Over the years, Fogelbach and the library have had to adjust to changing times, including the World Wide Web and advanced technology, while still staying current on the old standby — the books.

"Computers are a very big part of a library in this day and age,"

she said. "You have to be able to help people find what they're looking for, and today, they look on the Internet."

"And over time, we had books on cassette and CD. Then it was books downloaded on MP3 players or iPods. Now, the big thing is helping them put a book on their Nooks (computerized reading tablet)."

But, the mainstay remains the old-fashioned book.

"We're a public library," Fogelbach said. "We do not discriminate on the types of books we have. We try hard to keep our children's books as clean as possible, but we offer what we think people want to read. Do we have everything? No. We can't. But we try to cater to everyone."

Femme Osage Church Picnic On August 21

Femme Osage United Church of Christ, located off Highway T near Augusta, will hold its annual church picnic Sunday, Aug. 21, from noon to 6 p.m.

There will be a quilt raffle, a country store and bazaar shop.

Indoor and outdoor dining and carryouts will be available.

The menu will include kettle-cooked beef, deep-fried chicken, pie, bread and drinks.

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