

HENRY  
BURY

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For someone who has been around books all her life, Betty Colden now has to be content with having someone read her a book or listen to a 'talking' book.

"I do read some, but I don't see very well, so it's easier for me to listen to a story," she said.

Colden's health has deteriorated since suffering a serious stroke in early 2003. She spent several months at the Belleville hospital before her family moved her last August into the Belmont Long Term Care Facility on Bridge Street West.

The 83-year-old Colden is confined to a wheelchair "but I can go out anytime I want if someone pushes me."

The longtime Plaza Square resident spent a record 29 years on the Belleville Public Library board. Earlier this year, the current board came to the Belmont to honour Colden for her remarkable achievement.

The board presented her with a framed certificate from the city, signed by Mayor Mary-Anne Sills, that read "in recognition of and with deep gratitude for your 29 years of faithful service to the Belleville Public Library Board." She also received a framed print of the Belleville harbour.

Both hang proudly on the walls in her second floor room at the Belmont.

Asked how she feels with the civic recognition, Colden replied, "It ups your ego... it's a visual reminder of what I have done for the city's library."

Colden said books will always be important to her.

"I have a vivid imagination and books let me escape into some wonderful places and meet many interesting characters," she said.

"Being on the library board, I could always get the new editions first," she laughed.

Today, Colden looks forward to her "Bookworm" group gatherings in the solarium just down the hall from her room.

The group meets for a half hour, three times a week, to listen to a Belmont staff

member read to them.

"She was reading Harry Potter for about a month, so I didn't go. I am too old for Harry Potter," she said. "Now she's reading Chicken Soup and it's good."

Colden said it's much easier for her to listen to a story than read one. She also plans on using more talking books to satisfy her thirst for the written word.

When she wasn't reading, Colden was volunteering her services for various causes, including like the library, Guiding movement and the Belleville General Hospital Auxiliary.