
These women through partnerships with local community agencies derive support by developing ways to communicate through books with the children in their lives.

An ongoing partnership with Kitchener Public Library (KPL) provides a visiting library service once a month. Books are carefully chosen for personal use and for private family visits with their children. *Library Links for Life*, a joint venture between KPL, Kitchener Kiwanis and GVI teaches the women how to read to their children, provides a selection of children's books and enables the women to record the books on tape as a gift to be sent to their children. The women eagerly take their chosen book home to practice in preparation for taping. Many practice alone, some with friends, while others come to me for encouragement, in the library. Their efforts to personalize the story for their children are touching. What a precious gift we are all given by this wonderful community experience!

Local universities and colleges provide calendars for the women to plan their continuing education or to support their children in their academic career choices. As well, inter-library loans for academic requests are available from the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier and from Conestoga College.

A new partnership, recently introduced to me by one of the women, is "Books for Prisoners." The women make requests to this organization for books

to be donated for their personal use. Book publishers have been generous in their support of these women and children.

Working together, we have developed some enjoyable ways to keep in touch with families. Practicing books to read aloud over the phone, selecting materials for a private family visit, discovering crafts to share with children during an open visit, writing letters, stories and poetry all promote literacy and build family relationships.

Although the women may not always be able to hug their children, I admire their dedication to ensure that they remain linked to children through the magic of books: reading aloud to them by telephone, on tape or in person.

Our collective love of reading has helped us to open our minds and free our souls. ■■■

References

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