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By Sophie Braccini



Stuffed animals read a bedtime story Photo Linda Waldroup

Several beloved stuffed animals recently spent the night at the Moraga library. "Who knows what they will be up to when the library closes!" said children's librarian Sandy Steiner. The proud young owners of 31 assorted stuffies brought their soft friends to the library for an unusual program - a stuffed animal sleepover. During the night, the toys entrusted to Steiner and senior librarian Linda Waldroup read, made music, played ball, and hid in the stacks before settling down for a restful night's sleep with Steiner.

The next morning, the youngsters came back to retrieve the revelers, hear about what they had done, get pictures of the eventful night, and be treated to bagels and juice. This fun program will be one of the Steiner's last offerings; she is retiring at the end of the summer. "She brought tremendous energy and enthusiasm to her job here," said Waldroup.

Families immediately liked the program, which promotes a special relationship of trust between the children and the library. "One family, a boy and a girl, dictated a note to mom that was left with their stuffed animals," said Steiner. "The note told the animals not to worry and that they would have fun at the library. It promised that they would be picked up first thing in the morning. It was all just too

cute." Steiner was proud that the kids trusted the library with their stuffed animals. "I was not here the next morning for the pick-up, but the staff said that the parents were thrilled with the program," added Steiner.

The stuffed animal sleepover was a first in Moraga - one of the many new programs introduced by Steiner. "Sandy developed programming we'd never had," said Waldroup, "We began lapsit sessions (early literacy activities for babies and caregivers), toddler story time, and initiated activities like the Pizza Read-a-thon, the Stuffed Animal Sleepover, Wild Things, and the Royal Afternoon. She introduced Paws to Read here. She collaborated often with the Orinda and Lafayette children's programs to develop companion programming for Lamorinda Reads such as a multicultural fair. On the county level, she was very involved in the development of the children's collections and the Summer Reading Program. She recruited the Lion Dancers for Chinese New Year. Sandy also visited the local public schools regularly. She enthusiastically shared books in an effort to entice kids to the library."

Steiner, who was an elementary school teacher before earning a Masters of Library Science, said that one of her favorite jobs was visiting the elementary schools and bringing a bit of the library into the classes. "I am so impressed at how active the Moraga library is and how well used it is," she added, "It is a vital part of the community."

Steiner will leave the library at the end of August. The long time Moraga resident plans to travel, babysit her new twin grandchildren, garden and, of course, read. For a last chance to meet her, participate in the August children's program at the library - the Pizza Read-a-thon for families on Tuesday August 17th, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. Registration begins August 3rd.

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