



# The Lisa Libraries

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## WISH LIST

### Books

We would appreciate donations of new hardcover and paperback books for children ages 6 months to 18 years.

Areas of special need are Spanish language and bilingual books, classics, picture books, leveled readers, and board books.

### By the numbers

In 2022, we donated over 31,000 books, creating 179 libraries ranging in size from from 6 "inspirational" books requested

by a teenaged inmate in a California prison to 767 assorted children's books to 8 branches of the BHM Regional Library in rural eastern North Carolina when they lost their funding.

In the first 14 weeks of 2023 we have already created 58 libraries.

Are you following us on Facebook?

[www.facebook.com/lisalibraries](https://www.facebook.com/lisalibraries)

Have you visited our website?

[www.LisaLibraries.org](http://www.LisaLibraries.org)



## Dear Friends,

This year the Lisa Libraries will celebrate its 33rd birthday, which is hard to believe. Some of you have been supporting our efforts since the very beginning, and others are new to the scene. Whether you're an old or a new friend, I thought you might like a closer look at the Lisa Libraries, an organization that has a special place in my heart. It had its beginnings in 1990, when friends and I were seeking a way to honor a friend and colleague, children's book editor Lisa Novak, who died unexpectedly.

The idea behind the Lisa Libraries was to get brand-new books into the hands of underserved children. We reached out to publishers, reviewers, agents, authors, and illustrators asking for new kids' books, and their response over the years has been incredibly generous. From their donations, we've been able to establish small libraries in settings as diverse as shelters, Head Start programs, and prison waiting areas for kids visiting incarcerated parents. Many other books are given to children directly, especially through the foster care system.

The Lisa Libraries started off on a small scale. For a while, we were able to operate out of the spare bedroom in my New York City apartment. As more and more people found out about our endeavor, our donations grew, and we moved to warehouse space in Brooklyn, and eventually found a permanent home not far from where I now live in the Hudson Valley. My colleague Ellen Luksberg does an amazing job as the Executive Director of the Lisa Libraries. She oversees the day-to-day operations, keeping tabs on books in, books out, our mailing list, our newsletter, our website (thank you, Debrah), and our Facebook page. She networks with the many wonderful people and businesses that have supported us with books in the past and is constantly seeking new sources to keep our shelves full. She works carefully with every organization requesting books – to ensure that they receive exactly what

they need. She asks questions about how the books will be used, genres of interest, the age range of the population served, and the desired number of books. Since the Lisa Libraries relies on volunteers, Ellen coordinates a devoted group of people who dedicate their time to creating children's libraries. Joyce and Arlene help me get new books into the system and onto the shelves. Val, David, Lynne, and Lynn help Ellen put those donations together and get them shipped out both locally and across the country. And finally, Francesca our volunteer grant-writer, helps with our bottom line.

A typical day at the Lisa Libraries involves unpacking cartons of donated books, scanning the books into our database, and shelving the books by category. After an application for a library is approved, the volunteers carefully collect titles that fulfill the request, scan each one out, and then pack up the books for shipping to their final destination. An average donation typically includes between 100 - 300 books. To date, our largest donation consisted of 2500 books that were distributed to children in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Each summer we make donations to summer reading programs for underprivileged kids, making sure that every child will get to choose a new book to take home and keep. The Lisa Libraries also partners with food pantries so that children whose families visit the pantries can leave with new books of their own in addition to food for their kitchens.

Watching the Lisa Libraries grow from a spark of an idea to our bustling space staffed by dedicated volunteers has been one of my greatest joys. Here's to many more years of bringing children and books together.

Happy Reading,

*Ann Martin*

## BOOKS IN AND BOOKS OUT



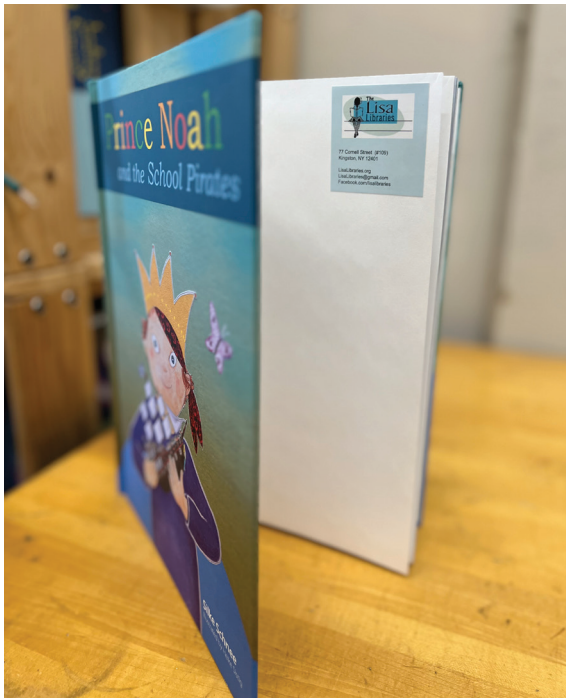
Val checking in a donation of books from our friend - author Rebecca Stead



Ann helping with a pick up of 500+ books for South Bronx United

## Otter Tail County, Minnesota

When Pamela Wiese, the librarian at rural Henning Public School, for grades pre-K through 12, approached us about a donation of books, she mentioned that the average age of the titles, both fiction and nonfiction, in the media center was 32 years. She added that for many of the 800 Henning citizens, young and old, the school library is the only library available to them. Henning, a Title 1 school where nearly half the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunches, doesn't have a budget for new books. Pam was working concession stands to earn money to put toward new books; she was eager to update the library with current nonfiction titles, as well as titles that feature underrepresented populations. When our donation arrived, Pam wrote to Ellen:



Second through fourth graders

*"How very exciting it was this morning when our custodial staff came into the library with boxes of books. Our students are going to go wild for them. What a truly wonderful day this is. Thank you." And she commented on the Lisa Libraries sticker that we place in each donated book. "The label is perfect. I will be explaining to all of the students that when they see this label they will know that the book they are holding was hand picked just for us!"*

Many weeks after delivery, Pam wrote to us again:

*I have touched these books several times...unloading from boxes, arranging for photos, sorting by genre, entering into our library system and yet STILL I am in wonder at the process that brought these fabulous books to us. My goodness, they are just so good. I look at a book and think, I know that I didn't see "this one" when we unpacked, or "that one". WOWSA, thank you does not even come close to how I am feeling. You guys are truly great at your job and from deep within my soul I will be grateful to you for this most amazing donation.*



## I Love Books!

One Thursday when I was working at the Lisa Libraries I heard a knock at the door and was happily surprised when I was handed a package of what turned out to be

very enthusiastic thank-you notes from the students at Kennedy Elementary School in Wellington, Kansas. Several months earlier the school's social worker, Angela Garlock, had written asking if we could help fill the shelves of the library. Kennedy is a Title 1 school serving 130 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, the library is under-funded, and school staff had been paying out of their pockets to add books to the school and classroom libraries. With book fairs no longer a fund-raising option for families that are struggling financially, Angela wondered if the Lisa



Libraries could lend a hand. Could we perhaps send copies of the Wimpy Kid series, the Bad Guy series, I Survived, Pug the Pig, biographies? . . . Yes, we could. Ellen and her team packed up 150 titles, sent them off, and the children's notes express their feelings about the brand-new books.

## Little Scholars

Every year the Chaldean Community Foundation located in Sterling Heights, MI, and serving Metro Detroit, helps a vulnerable population of thousands of newly arrived immigrants and refugees. Services are offered to help parents navigate the American school and health-care systems,

and for their children there's the Little Scholars preschool program. Susan Smith, grant writer for CCF, contacted the Lisa Libraries about developing a library for the Little Scholars' new reading corner. She wrote that she was seeking enough books to allow parents to check out one title per week, adding

that "the take-home books would allow parents that are new to the English language to develop an evening book and reading practice with their child." Last December the Lisa Libraries sent 80+ books for these young learners, pictured below with their teacher. We love seeing those happy faces!





## Who We Are and What We Do



Ann sorting incoming books - in her happy place



Ellen, our Executive Director, at command central



Val sorting and packing - in her happy place



Lynn (left) and Lynne helping to create outgoing libraries



Arlene (left) and Joyce shelving



Francesca, our grant-writer, working remotely



David - taking his task very seriously

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