

FEATURES

Diane Rodriguez brings gift of reading to Rosie's Place

By Kathy Kurtz Ferrari
Times Staff

April is recognized as Volunteer Month, but Milton resident Diane Rodriguez volunteers time every week throughout the year to share her passion for reading.

Rodriguez is a librarian in Marlboro, and previously worked at schools in Quincy and at Boston Latin School. She also volunteered for years at

Tucker School, helping in the classrooms of her three children, Evita, Felipe and Sofia.

But every Monday, she can be found volunteering to spread literacy for a different audience, as she and a friend help run a library at Rosie's Place, a shelter for poor and homeless women in Boston.

When Rodriguez first arrived at Rosie's Place, she found the organization did have books, but they were in need of an organized system of shelving and weeding out old titles.

"It was very disorganized. It was a mess," Rodriguez said. "The books were just all over the place with no organization. All the children's books were mixed in with the adult's and young adult's. So we set about organizing it."

Rodriguez times her visits to Rosie's Place around lunchtime so she is able to speak with some of the women who use the library.

"We really love interacting with [the guests]. They are so sweet, and grateful. They want good things to read."

The women enjoy all sorts of books, and the system is a one-way library, meaning the books do not need to be returned.

Rodriguez has been able to get additional books by working with libraries throughout the Greater Boston area. This year's Massachusetts Library Conference is going to have a booth to raise money for magazine subscriptions for Rosie's Place. Rodriguez plans to contact the Milton Public Library to see if a donation area for Rosie's Place could be established, but that may take some time, she said.

According to Sue Marsh, executive director of Rosie's Place, Rodriguez's efforts have really made an impact on the organization.

"She's really created a lovely resource for our guests," Marsh said, adding that she has seen Rodriguez interact with women who visit, and they clearly appreciate having access to books. "They get a lot of pleasure from that re-



Diane Rodriguez helps organize books at the library at Rosie's Place.

(Photo courtesy of Rosie's Place)

source. They have expectations that are met, which is terrific. They have questions that Diane can answer. Having access to a real librarian, who can help direct people to explore their interests, is really just a gift. We never have that here."

Rodriguez clearly seems to find fulfillment from sharing her love of reading.

"American Library Association has this code that says, 'Reading is a window to the world.' And it absolutely is. You can go anywhere, do anything, by reading. It really opens doors and windows to people, whether it's a magazine or a best-selling book. It's a way to see what's going on in the world," Rodriguez said.

"It is so important to realize that everyone deserves good information," she added. "I wish I could go in more often, because, as you can imagine, [the library] doesn't stay as nice as we leave it for very long. ... But that just means it's been used."

Rosie's Place will celebrate its 40th anniversary April 20. It is located at 889 Harrison Ave. in Boston. The organization serves over 12,000 women a year, with 300 to 400 visitors per day. It does not receive any government funding.

To donate, volunteer or get more information, visit www.rosiesplace.org.

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