

## REACHING OUT TO SENIORS

by Jo Ann Byers,  
Warsaw Community Public Library

**S**enior citizens are an important segment of the Warsaw Community Public Library's (WCPL) constituency. We are constantly looking for ways to reach out to them and to encourage them to use our services, whether or not they are able to visit our facilities. This article will briefly describe two special services that we've designed for those seniors who are unable to come in.

### SENIOR CIRCUIT

The Senior Circuit program, which has existed for more than five years, is provided by the Community Services (CS) Staff who are responsible for the programming at WCPL. The concept of this program came about several years ago when Margaret Fritzel, the then Library Assistant in Children's Services, read a newspaper article in which a local nursing home was seeking volunteers to read to their patients. Fritzel suggested to her supervisor that the CS Staff might be interested in taking turns going to this nursing home to read. The CS Staff agreed and began regularly visiting the nursing home to read to the patients. Word about this project got around and soon other elder care facilities in the Library's taxing district began requesting that the CS Staff do the same for them. After several programs had been presented at the various facilities, a contest was held to name this service and the title Senior Circuit came into being.

Fritzel is now the CS Supervisor and the Senior Circuit provides programs at eight health care and/or retirement residences each month. Four members of the CS Staff rotate among the facilities to present these programs. The same program is presented at each of the eight facilities during a given month. This means that when all goes according to schedule, each CS staff member prepares and presents a program on the Senior Circuit about three times per year. By having different staff members, and occasionally a guest, present the programs, residents of the various facilities are treated to a variety and each presenter is not over-taxed with preparations for these special programs.

Program topics and activities are as varied as the

personalities and interests of the presenters. Past programs have included topics such as bread, famous Hoosiers, Laura Ingalls Wilder, hats, the music of Indiana, flowers and their meanings, Lawrence Welk, the surprising soy bean, Indian Legends, and the stories behind hymns. Sometimes the presenter uses visual aids or has the audience sing-along or some other interactive participation to get those attending the programs involved to assure their interest. Clearly, limitations are set only by the creativity of the presenter. The Senior Circuit has proven to be a very popular service offered by WCPL.

### SERVICE TO THE HOMEBOUND

A second service offered to those who are unable to come into the building to avail themselves of the Library's services is the WCPL Service to the Homebound. This service is offered to residents of Wayne Township who cannot get to the Library because of permanent physical disability, visual impairment, temporary convalescence, or age. In order to qualify for this service, the resident must have a current Library card and must complete a Homebound Services Application. Both of these matters may be handled by a family member or by someone selected by the applicant.

The homebound person may request specific titles or authors. Or, if they prefer, they may give the Homebound Services Coordinator information on the topics that they enjoy and leave the specific choice to the Homebound Services Coordinator. The homebound person may call the Library with requests at any time during business hours. However, the Coordinator makes a delivery only once every 21 days. This time period corresponds to the Library's check-out time for books and books on tape. The Coordinator calls the homebound person once every 21 days to arrange for the delivery or return of the library materials.

This homebound service has proven to be another very popular service at WCPL. However, looking at the statistics of this service would not necessarily give the impression of its popularity. Unfortunately, many of our homebound patrons have fragile health and we often

find that as we sign on a new user, we lose a former one. This is the downside to being the Coordinator of this program. One can grow quite fond of the patrons served and it is difficult to lose so many of them.

Obviously, neither of these services is limited strictly to senior citizens. However, it does seem that seniors are the ones who most often take advantage of these offerings. Both the Senior Circuit and the Service to the Homebound are attempts by WCPL to meet needs within the community by reaching outside of the traditional bounds of the Library building walls.

*For further information, contact Jo Ann Byers at [jbyers@wcpl.lib.in.us](mailto:jbyers@wcpl.lib.in.us).*