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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

FROM A TO Z IN A YEAR

Librarian Susan Palm reads to a small group of children at Bakersfield's Beale Memorial Library. In order to better serve their young patrons, Palm and fellow librarian Elizabeth Stewart have pledged to read the entire children's fiction collection — all 9,000 volumes — by next February. CASEY CHRISTIE / THE CALIFORNIAN

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Nearly 1,400 inmates serving life terms have been paroled over the past three years — including eight from Kern County
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Librarians tackle reading challenge

BY COURtenay EDElhart

Californian staff writer
cadelhart@bakersfield.com

On the east wall of the room housing children's books at Beale Memorial Library downtown, a big white banner chronicles an epic countdown.

It is a public declaration of an ambitious project. Librarians Elizabeth Stewart and Susan Palm have vowed to read all 9,000 chapter books in the library's children's fiction collection by Feb. 1, 2015.

They've divided up the authors in alphabetical order. Stewart will read A-L and Palm will read M-Z. That's 4,500 books apiece, ranging from early reading to high school novels.

The project kicked off on Feb. 1, and so far they're each about 10 books in.

The idea is to obtain first-hand knowledge of the mammoth collection so they can make more informed recommendations to children.

"The first rule of a librarian is to know your collection," Stewart said. "It will be nice to be able to say honestly to someone, 'You should read this. I've read it, and it's really good.' Or maybe something is checked out and I can say, 'If you like that author, try this one who is similar.'

The ambitious undertaking was Stewart's idea. Years ago at Bakersfield College she had set a personal goal to get through the BC library's adult fiction collection.

"I got through all the As and Bs but never finished," she said. "I had a really heavy course load."

The latest endeavor started out in the same vein as a personal goal, but when Stewart confided in Palm about it, her co-worker demanded in on it.



CASEY CHRISTIE / THE CALIFORNIAN

Librarian Susan Palm reads to some children Tuesday at Beale Memorial Library. The librarians are splitting the young adult fiction collection and reading every single book — more than 9,000 titles.

"It's just a really cool idea," Palm said. "It forces you out of your comfort zone. Like I don't really read all the boy stuff about sports and all, but now I'll be reading those, too."

The one-year deadline was sort of arbitrary. They just wanted to have a clear goal, fearing that if they left it open-ended, they'd never finish.

The banner is another effort to hold themselves accountable. As they progress through the collection, they plan to post their numbers. The banner also will have pictures of book covers here and there to highlight titles the librarians particularly enjoyed.

"We want to call attention to some overlooked books that aren't necessarily classics you're exposed to at school," Stewart said.

Maria Rutledge, a supervisor at Beale, applauded the librarians for taking on the project.

"This is something



CASEY CHRISTIE / THE CALIFORNIAN

Beale Memorial librarian Elizabeth Stewart works at her station with a timeline in the background pertaining to the thousands of books Stewart will be reading at the library.

they're doing on their own time when they're not working, and it's going to help them to serve our patrons better," she said.

At the library Tuesday, students Emiliano Varela and Juan Ambriz were amazed by the effort.

"I don't read that often," said Ambriz, 15. "That would take me years."

Carolyn Thompson, 53, was visiting the library with

her teenage son. She appreciates the pursuit of informed opinions.

"They'll be able to make recommendations truthfully, not just guessing," she said. "It's challenging, but it's really exciting that they'd even consider it."

Best of all, the librarians said they now have an excuse to get out of anything at home that they don't want to do.

San Joaquin hospital given special heart designation

BY COURtenay EDElhart

Californian staff writer
cadelhart@bakersfield.com

The American Heart Association has certified San Joaquin Community Hospital as a STEMI heart attack receiving center, the first hospital in Kern County and one of only 29 in the state with that accreditation.

To apply for that distinc-

tion, the hospital had to first be recognized by the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care as an accredited chest pain center. It also had to demonstrate consistency in performance measures for heart attack patient care.

STEMI is an acronym for ST segment elevation myocardial infarction, the most serious type of heart

attack. During it the coronary artery is completely blocked off by a blood clot, causing significant portions of the heart muscle to die.

Bakersfield Memorial, San Joaquin Community and Bakersfield Heart hospitals have all applied to be STEMI receiving centers but San Joaquin is the first to win the accreditation.

A STEMI receiving center is a hospital equipped with a catheterization lab and approved by the county to take those patients.

If the system works as planned, patients in ambulances will be directed to a STEMI receiving center over other hospitals so they can get the right kind of treatment at a time when minutes count.