

# Daily Herald

## Tate Woods library honored for its work

**Joan G. Broz**

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A cardboard Cat in the Hat offers a welcoming smile and hand to students at the Tate Woods Elementary School library.

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The stories are among more than 8,500 books, magazines and learning aids on the Lisle school's library shelves.

Many of those books, arranged in alphabetical order, line low shelves waiting for a little hand to pull its spine and peruse its pages. Standing slightly open along the top shelf, other books seem to call out, "Pick me! Pick me!"

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There is even an adoption certification for "Charlie," a sea turtle living in Walton Rocks Beach, Fla. Parents give their children a penny for each book they read and it's saved in individual cardboard banks until collectively there is enough money to adopt an animal. The library staff organizes the effort.

In the center of the room, a long black-and-white stuffed snake is an eye-catching attraction curled around the library's center post, while an affable stuffed lion snuggles atop a magazine shelf.

The room is inviting. It is bright, colorful and organized. Students can use numerous table-and-chair configurations. There are 11 computers clustered in the room, with an additional computer lab adjoining the open space.

“The students flow into and out of the computer lab, and I also instruct students there,” said Judith Bauman, learning resource director. “All computers have our automated card catalog and online encyclopedias.”

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“We take all kinds of virtual field trips before going to the Shedd Aquarium,” Bauman said. “Then when we go, and the students actually see the animal they have spent so much time researching, it makes a real connection.”

Students are encouraged to use the library each day. Many work independently, selecting books from their personal accelerated reading list.

The library is designed to be the hub of activity in the classroom wing of the building. Each classroom door opens into the library, allowing the space to also serve as a broad hallway and resource center.

The library is central to the school’s activities.

For those reasons, along with enrichment activities the library staff plans and achieves each year, the Tate Woods library was cited in the Illinois School Library Media Association’s Illinois study titled “Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners.”

The research looked at 661 public elementary and secondary schools and compared their Illinois Standard Achievement Test scores and Prairie State Achievement Examination scores. The two-year study revealed four strong predictors of high achievement scores:

- Schools with at least one trained librarian, as well as supportive staff and aides, have higher scores;
- High-scoring students often have flexible access to school libraries and make frequent visits;
- Successful librarians spent more time collaborating with classroom teachers; and
- Successful school libraries have large collections and allow students to use technology

Bauman says she promotes reading by talking to teachers twice a year about new books and other notable releases. Her staff encourages book selections and promotes voting for the state Monarch Award, in which students in kindergarten through third grade cast ballots for their favorite book.

Bauman and her staff also schedule classroom author visits, book fairs, celebrity readers and a used book exchange. In one area of the room, baskets contain teacher materials pulled together for classroom use.

The school links to the Lisle Public Library in several ways, with librarians attending in-service workshops and registering new card members at the school's September open house. The two libraries have reciprocal borrowing practices.

To keep current, Bauman attends workshops sponsored by School and Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education, a nonprofit group. The students hope to earn the organization's 2006 Ecology Flag.

To that end, students collected used sneakers to be ground into playground material, worked on an outdoors science and reading courtyard and looked at energy expenditure National Library Week started Sunday and is a reminder that libraries are service-oriented entities that focus on books and much more. Libraries encourage reading, nourish creativity, develop environmental awareness and help improve student achievement scores.

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As Dr. Seuss said, "These things are fun, and fun is good."