

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Outgoing Ponte Vedra reference librarian will be missed

To the editor:

Did you know that our wonderful reference librarian, Joan Hakala, is retiring at the end of this month? We will miss her a great deal! She first came to the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library from Broward County in July of 2007. While reference librarians provide a great deal of in-person and virtual assistance, helping with everything from applying for jobs to getting tax forms to answering very unique questions and more, often what they do behind-the-scenes is missed by the general public. I'd like to take a moment to let you know about some of the truly special things Joan has done for our library during the time I've known her from October 2009 – when I arrived – to the present.

Joan has supported me and my youth patrons immensely on more than one occasion though they likely don't know it! Because I worked at two brand new branch libraries before coming here, I'm not as experienced in weeding materials as Joan. By weeding, I mean removing materials that are outdated or unused after a long

period of time. Thanks to Joan, back in 2014 when our library system conducted a systemwide inventory of all of our materials, Joan helped me prune my collection to the extent that I was able to let go of some really outdated books (pay phones, Pluto is a planet, etc.) to the extent that I could remove two full shelving units and create what is now our very popular Tween Zone! The Tween Zone was created to give elementary-aged kids and tweens not yet ready for our Teen Department a special place to play chess and checkers, and to read complete with neon splats and fun furniture. Our Tweens really love their space and being recognized as patrons in their own right deserving of an area to call their own.

Joan didn't stop there, however. She took that expertise and precision and applied it to adult non-fiction as well – after all, we can't have outdated medical or technology books! She did such a good job tightening up her collection and making it very relevant that she was able to allow me to move our teen books such that we were able to remove two big



photo submitted

(From left) Anne Crawford, assistant branch manager and youth services librarian; Joan Hakala, reference librarian; and Amy Ring, branch manager

shelving units, thus more than doubling our space in the Teen Department! After that, the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library purchased our tall tables, teen seating, chess/checkers table to make our tiny strip of a Teen Department into a fully-realized Teen Department funky coffee house feel. Our Teens love their department! The icing on the cake is that Joan shifted her materials afterwards, allowing us a shelving unit back that we put at the end of Teen Fiction, allowing us for buy more teen books (without sacrificing their department's space!) and shelve

them. Joan is a huge reason our Teen Department is what it is today, and we and the teens couldn't be more grateful!

This is all without not yet touching on all the ways Joan positively impacts our patrons every day in her line of service. Our adult patrons enjoy Bingo for Books, special Scottish dance programs and presentations, and the technical and skilled assistance Joan provides at our Reference Desk from downloadables for gadgets and answering a myriad of reference questions that come her way. On a personal level, Joan is a delight to work with – her

droll humor and sly observations never fail to make me laugh and we have a playful Adult Services vs. Youth Services repartee I will deeply miss! Who on Earth will keep me in line now? You have to keep your eyes on us Youth Services folk – we are as zany (and may I say, wonderful) as the kids and teens we serve!

If you haven't stopped by our Library recently or if you haven't spoken to Joan in recent times, do drop in before April 27 and help us wish her well! We will greatly miss her both as a reference librarian and as a colleague. I am truly grateful for all

she has done in support of youth services and truly all she's done to make the adult services side of our library accessible, open, engaging and serene. From cozy seating areas to removing shelving to give everyone more space to enjoy our library in a multitude of ways to skilled and helpful service at our reference desk, Joan is leaving her legacy...

We will sincerely miss Joan both personally and professionally! We look forward to welcoming Maribeth Wood starting April 23 – Reference librarian from our Bartram Trail Branch Library – who we know will do a fantastic job, but that said, I think we're all in agreement about "retiring Joan's number" as they say in football. May Joan take all the amazing vacations she desires and come back to tell us all about them!

Thank you for taking the time to read.

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