

Good News from the Reading Front—Update on the DODG Program February 3, 2012

Today when Ken Kerle and I were at the Shawnee County Juvenile Detention Center to read, I opened by asking the girls to whom we would be reading in Module A if they all had the maximum allowed three books (in addition to religious books) in their rooms. There was some hesitancy in responding and one of the staff members asked if we knew about their new policy regarding the use of Kindle electronic books. The staff member advised us that the Kindle devices had been made available through Topeka USD 501 to those students who had achieved the “blue” or highest level in the point system used at the Center. Those in this status were given a Kindle to take to the rooms with a system that provides them access to what I would estimate to be some 200 books that have been downloaded.

As we discussed this development, it became clear that the fortunate ones who have achieved the “blue” level still enjoy reading books in regular print. One girl said that she used Kindle but preferred the more traditional printed book when she read. Only five girls in our group of twelve had become eligible to have Kindle so the rest of the group still relies exclusively on the paperback books of the type that our Club helps make available.

So, I think that we can salute the Topeka School District for taking this step to make more reading materials available to residents at the Juvenile Detention Center but realize that there still is a need for the printed paperbacks that we have been providing to the Center since 1998.

I have mentioned that it would be helpful if we had a volunteer or a committee of volunteers who would take charge of seeking and receiving donation of paperback books that can be used at the Juvenile Center. This would be an important way of supplementing the funds that we provide to the Center staff to purchase new books each year. I encourage you to consider volunteering for this role by letting President Clyde know of your interest. Whoever coordinates this effort might designate one day a month for members to bring books which would

then be taken to the Juvenile Detention Center for processing by the staff there. Broader efforts to encourage donation from other Optimist clubs, other groups, and members of the community at large might be considered. This sort of activity might allow those members who are not available to read to the kids to play an important role in supporting the Downtown Optimist Reading Discussion Group program.