

## Update on Reading at the County Juvenile Detention Center

Ken Kerle and I have continued the weekly reading program at the Juvenile Detention Center. The numbers volunteering to take part in the program have increased and, over the two most recent weeks, we have had 15 to 20 youth in each of our groups. We usually select stories by contemporary authors since these seem to be of the most interest to the kids. However, several weeks ago, for the girls group, we chose what may be considered a classic, **The Invisible Man**, written in 1897 by H.G. Wells. A work such as this, emphasizing the dialects of an earlier time and another country, presents something of a challenge to our group. We interpret the language a bit for our listeners and the girls seem to be interested in the story. The Invisible Man is not a very nice person and the story recounts his stealing from his father, frequently being rude, stealing money from a minister, and pushing people around. One of the girls in the group, in the language of today, commented: "My, the Invisible Man really has issues!" This is one of several books Ken and I found when we visited the Thrift Store at the Topeka-Shawnee County Library to purchase books for possible use with the Downtown Optimist Discussion Group (DODG).

On Friday, April 8, I was asked back to the Shepherd's Center to speak about the DODG program under the title of "Books Behind Bars." I was pleased that a group of over 50 elected to attend this session. We had a lot of good questions and comments and one person who sought information about how to go about donating books for the kids' supply at the Center. I traced the history of the program back to its beginning in August of 1998, pointed out that we are told that reading has become an important part of the Center's programs, and reported that our Club had been able to contribute over \$3,000 for the purchase of books over the past 12 plus years.

On the subject of donations, may I add a personal note? I was pleased that when I last attended club on April 1, I was able to pick up a bag of paperbacks brought by Justin McGarity and take them to the Volunteer Coordinator for use at the Jail and Juvenile Detention Center. Justin was a faithful contributor as are several

other members and I am so glad that his books are being read at the Center.  
T.H.