

T O W N S

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Librarian Bev Major adds a children's book to a collection at the Westminister West Library in the memory of Westminister West teacher Claire Oglesby who died last year.

‘A Corner for Claire’

By HOWARD WEISS-TISMAN
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WESTMINSTER — When Claire Oglesby died in August 2009, her family asked friends and family members to make donations in her name to a local library.

Oglesby taught for more than three decades in the Westminister West School and shortly after her death, checks started arriving at the tiny library in the town.

Bev Major, the librarian at the library, put the checks away, hoping that eventually there would be enough money to invest in a collection of books for children in Oglesby's name.

About \$900 was eventually donated in her name, and this week Major and the Westminister West Library Board of Directors are unveiling the new collection.

"When people asked what they could do, the family suggested that donations go to local libraries," said Major. "We got small and large donations and they kept coming in."

On Wednesday, Jan. 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the library, Oglesby will be remembered in a special celebration of the educator's life and of the new Claire Oglesby Collection on Peace and Cultural Diversity.

Major has invited a few of Oglesby's former students to talk about how those lessons on international understanding have had an impact on their lives, and there will be a special showing of the feature film, "The World in Claire's Classroom," by Marlboro filmmakers Lisa Merton and Alan Dater.

The film will be shown in the Westminister West Church.

Oglesby stressed understanding between cultures and tried to intro-



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The Westminister West Library.

duce her young students to the world outside of the state.

Through the years, she forged a relationship with a school and community in Puerto Rico, and even took groups of students and parents down to the Caribbean a few times.

A few months after she died, a \$100 check arrived from the community in Puerto Rico in Oglesby's name.

After it became clear that the Westminister West Library had to make some decisions about the money, Major said there was a strong feeling that books should be purchased for elementary age children, which are the grades Oglesby taught.

And it was also obvious that the books should stress cross-cultural understanding and world peace.

"These are the things that Claire's teaching centered on," said Major. "Anyone who spent time in Claire's

classroom will tell you that and this is a way the library wants her to be remembered."

The library was able to purchase about 35 books, which are a mix of fiction and nonfiction, which will have their own bookshelf and will be set off on their own in "A Corner for Claire."

She said she hopes the library will continue to add to the collection through the years.

"This is a way to honor her, but it is also a way to introduce a new generation of children to what Claire taught every day," said Major. "Claire taught her students about cultural diversity and about working for peace and building community and we hope these books will be here to keep people thinking about those ideas."

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