

Retiring H-F librarian says books are still a thing with students

BY MARILYN THOMAS
mthomas@hfchronicle.com

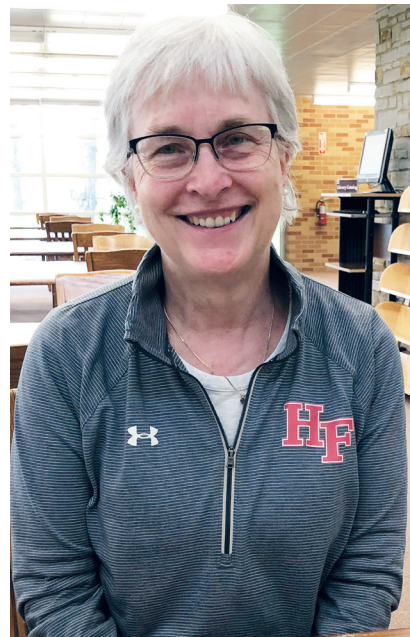
Homewood-Flossmoor High School head librarian Jane Harper has seen many changes in her 16 years at H-F, but students' love of books has remained a constant.

"Kids still love the print books. Kids love to read," she said. "Our budget is such that we're able to provide them with the newest and best examples of young adult literature and they are just eating it up. Circulation on our books is really strong."

Harper's first profession was an ad agency writer. She left the professional world to raise three children. When the kids got older, Harper went back to school to earn a degree in library science from the University of Illinois.

Her first assignment was as a youth librarian at the Flossmoor Public Library. She found that her job meant outreach in the schools and "finally I decided I'd really like to be a school librarian" so she went back to school for certification in that branch of library science.

Harper worked at Sandburg and Hillcrest High Schools before H-F's head librarian Kathy Tisoncik encouraged her



Jane Harper

to apply for a position at H-F.

"I had always wanted to work here. I lived in Flossmoor. My husband (Jim Harper) graduated in 1974 and all three

of my children graduated from here and it was such a pleasure to be able to come to work here," she said. She said Tisoncik was a great mentor during the 10 years they worked together.

Harper said working in the H-F library has been a "great experience because we've had a great team." Working with her are librarian Alicia Rodriguez and Teresa Bagatella, library technical assistant.

Looking back at her school librarian career, Harper said the use of technology has changed the way libraries operate.

"Computers have been a revolution," she said. "They've taken the library from a print-based place of books on shelves to an online presence. The online sources have just exploded, and the electronic library is as busy as our physical library. Statistics on the usages of all our electronic materials are really high. The resources are constantly being used, but you don't see people in here using them, but the stats are really high."

"It's rewarding to see the virtual library you're building is being used," Harper added. "We like that because the students can access the resources when and where they need to, without any barriers."

Harper doesn't believe print books will lose their popularity. She relates the story of a student who came in asking for a fiction book, but all three print copies were checked out. She offered the online version, but the student passed. He waited for a print copy.

"I'm still pushing the online books because I think it's the wave of the future, but people still want print," she said.

"The two formats are co-existing much more than I think people thought they would. I remember people saying print will be gone forever but that's not really happening. They're really co-existing, sort of like print books and audio books. Audio books didn't take over print books."

In the past several years, Harper has seen "an explosion of books by diverse authors." She sees it as a movement in the publishing industry starting to represent all voices and she finds H-F students "are really responding to it."

Because of the diversity, the librarians have been able to put together displays each month, for example for Women's History Month, Asian-American and Pacific Island Month and Black History Month, with these new authors.

HIRING FOR 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR

WILLOW SCHOOL NURSE



Willow School Nurse Job Benefits

- Reliable M-F schedule; be home by 3:30 PM
- Off weekends, summers, school holidays
- Supportive, family-friendly work environment
- Lots of love: you'll be a superhero to Willow's little learners!
- We're open to a job-sharing arrangement



hsd153.org/careers/



Homewood
School District 153

FOOD SERVICES



Hiring for All Positions

- 24-30 hours per week
- Eligibility for state IMRF pension plan
- Paid sick/personal time off
- Some positions eligible for district health insurance
- Supportive, friendly work environment
- Call Dana Pries at number below to discuss



708-922-2417