

New Jersey Book Drive Benefits Fox Point Library



Robyn O'Donnell with her 10-year-old daughter Erin

This fall, Robyn O'Donnell decided to do some community service with her 10-year-old daughter Erin. For advice on volunteer work, she turned to her aunt Diane Bonavota, the Development Director for Palladia. Bonavota immediately thought of a book drive for Fox Point, the agency's new supportive housing in the Bronx. Formerly homeless families had moved in during the summer, and the building's brand new library was still half empty.

O'Donnell and her daughter decided to take on the challenge. With the help of the local Girl Scouts, of which Erin is a

member, the O'Donnell's created collection boxes, posters and flyers. For a few weeks, they advertised the drive in the elementary school and shops of Gillette, NJ, a small town in Morris County.

"We got such a great turnout!" Robyn said. "I stopped counting at over 1,000 but I think we got approximately 3,000 books in all."

They told fellow residents the books would benefit formerly homeless families and the people of Gillette were eager to contribute. "The girls who helped me have many books and they take them for granted," said Robyn. "It was a wake-up call for them to hear that other kids had never been to the library."

The extensive book collection, both for children and adults, is now at the Fox Point library, where a Palladia vocational counselor has sorted them out using the Dewey Decimal system.

"I was surprised that the whole community made such an effort," Robyn said.

"And it was a great way of bringing awareness of what is going on outside our little town."