

# Book pantry searching for new material

**By Chris Sykes Staff Writer, Orange Transcript 11/19**

Years go by and the seasons turn from one extreme to the next, but Carol Lukoff said her mission to promote books and reading to children of all ages with Orange's schools continues.

Lukoff and her husband recently were among the attendees for Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr.'s annual ball. While there, she remained on message when it came to her literary advocacy.

"Literacy changes lives, and any program that encourages kids to read and gets them to read is a worthwhile thing," said Lukoff. "Putting books into kids' hands is the only way to achieve fluent reading and literacy and that's why we give them books to keep at home. That belief and practice has morphed into a free bookstore called the Children's Book Pantry of Orange at the YWCA."

According to Lukoff, who serves as a social worker with the Orange School District, at least 80 percent of a child's time is spent at home or outside of school. She said that does not have to mean reading or learning ends once students are dismissed from school.

"It's important to find books and other reading materials that children and students are actually interested in reading: fiction, non-fiction, adventure novels, sports, joke books or historically and culturally specific books."

Lukoff said she has collected books by writing letters to newspapers and publishing ads in them, posting requests for "gently used" books online and on community bulletin boards, and by calling schools, churches, synagogues and youth programs to ask for their old books.

"People have been very open to the idea of giving their old books away for someone else to use. The alternative would be to just let them sit unused in storage or throw them away. I take those books and put them to good use because studies have shown that access to enriching children's literature is one of the 'secrets' to higher achievement in upper income communities," said Lukoff. "Providing our children in Orange with this same access to quality reading material will bring parity to our children in a very concrete sense, leveling the playing field in terms of what children are exposed to, and inevitably leading to higher scores on assessment tests."

Lukoff said the pantry will be open Mondays and Wednesdays after school and, on Saturday mornings, any residents can come in and get books for free. Orange residents select three free children's books.