

# WMBA Donates More than 100 Books to Juvenile Hall Following Annual Book Drive

by Myrlys L. Stockdale



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**Judge Bunmi Awoniyi addresses the audience at Underground Books about the importance of books during the WMBA Book Drive**

The Wiley W. Manuel Bar Association (WMBA) added more than 100 books to Sacramento County Juvenile Hall's library shelves. On February 28, 2018, in celebration of Black History Month, WMBA hosted its annual book drive for the benefit of Sacramento's Juvenile Hall Library.

Sacramento Superior Court Judge **Bunmi Awoniyi** spoke at the event which was held at Underground Books in Oak Park. Judge Awoniyi shared her powerful stories of reading the classics – and even the dictionary – to enhance her mastery of the English language.

Are there really teenagers who opt for books over social media? Yes: the 140 teenagers who reside in Juvenile Hall.

According to Nicole De La Riva,

the Juvenile Hall librarian, when social media is taken away from kids and you put a book in their hand, they will read. Many of the kids read three books a

week. "They like to read in their rooms at night," De La Riva explained. "They do a lot of self-reflection; some have had traumatic experiences and the books are an escape."

With respect to the African-American residents, De La Riva said they love to read books they can identify with, and they are actually interested in the book. "It keeps them going because it is an escape for these kids."

WMBA member **June Powells-Mays** organized the first book drive in 2013 when she received a request from the probation department for book donations. She recalled that, "I immediately thought about the disproportionate number of African-American youth housed at the Detention Center and wondered if they had any books they could relate to and be inspired by."

According to Powells-Mays, she "also thought about the power of



**Judge Bunmi Awoniyi (center) with WMBA Board members at the WMBA Annual Book Drive**

books to transport you from wherever you are to wherever you want to be, both literally and figuratively. My hope was that by reading books donated by WMBA, the youth at the Detention Center would be encouraged to see beyond their current circumstances and be inspired and equipped to live posi-

tive and productive lives upon release. “

**Adrian Carpenter**, WMBA’s current president, said the Annual Book Drive has become a part of the organization’s DNA. “Our theme this year is “preserving our local legacy” and with that theme we continue on the traditions that make our organization

great. Community outreach is such a huge part of our legacy and the Annual Book Drive allows us to continue giving to the youth of Sacramento.”

De La Riva instituted a program where a child receives a free book for every five books read. She shared a story of one child who earned four books after reading 20 books, and he told her those were

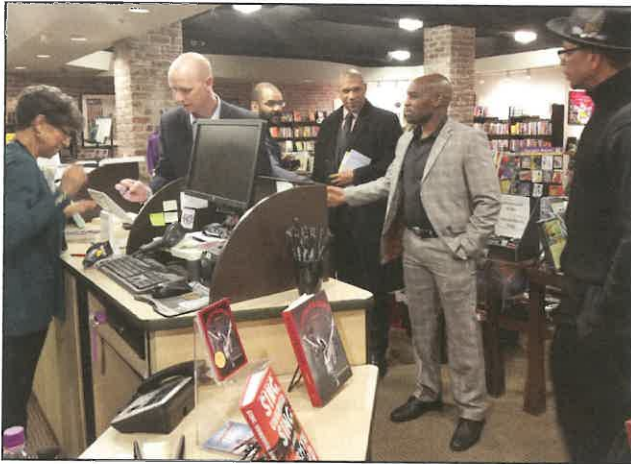


**Chief Probation Officer Lee Seale with WMBA 2018 President Adrian Carpenter**

the only books he has ever earned.

Every child leaves the Juvenile Hall with a library card thanks to an arrangement made with the Sacramento Public Library.

According to De La Riva, they “cannot survive without donations because we are not in the County’s budget.” Book lovers interested in donating books may contact De La Riva at (DeLaRivaN@SacCounty.Net), and she will work with you to make arrangements to receive the donation. ✍️



**Chief Probation Officer Lee Seale purchasing books from Underground Books Manager Georgia “Mother Rose” West as WMBA members look on**

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