



Rick Chrzan on Saturday considers books to be included in Little City's June sale. DARRELL GOEMAAT/PHOTO FOR THE TRIBUNE

Charity book sale is year-round job

Who: Rick Chrzan, 56, of Elk Grove Village, is a volunteer with Palatine-based Little City's annual book sale.

What he does: Chrzan, the father of a grown daughter, worked in sales and operations management but was laid off last spring and wanted to find something "positive and productive" to do with his time.

"I was familiar with them," Chrzan said of Little City, a nonprofit organization assisting children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities that recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Chrzan's nephew has Down syndrome and has used Little City's facilities for sports, and Chrzan also worked with residents of Little City through their employment program in the past.

Chrzan works two or three days a week for up to four hours at a time, and has become dependable and knowledgeable enough where he manages groups of volunteers working in the warehouse, explaining the guidelines, answering questions and helping do the work.

The book sale is held every year at Westfield Old Orchard Shopping Center in Skokie, and this year will be held June 4 to 13, said Kathryn Nelson, the volunteer manager. "It is an all-volunteer enterprise and the largest volunteer-driven fundraising event we have," Nelson said.

In fact, Little City receives so many books that it has a warehouse at the Palatine campus that is open year-round. Volunteers sort through the books, deciding which are in good condition for sale (others are recycled), sort them by genre, then by hard or soft cover, and price them according to certain guidelines. Books are then

boxed and stored before being transported to the sale.

"It's just incredible the spread and wealth of books they get there," Chrzan said, from collectibles to everyday books.

More than 350 volunteers worked last year's book sale, and Nelson is hoping to increase that to 400. There are usually 250,000 to 300,000 books for sale at the event, which raised more than \$200,000 last year, said Lisa Reyes, director of communications. Books that did not sell last year are not resold so the book supply is fresh every year.

Why he does it: Chrzan was always a book lover. He had volunteered elsewhere in the past, but "the thing about Little City is they really appreciate your efforts and they show it," he said.

"The whole part of volunteering, too, is that it's personally fulfilling and the fact the you know you can make a difference and make a positive contribution and that is rewarding in itself," he said.

"Obviously with the state of the economy and donor fatigue widespread, volunteering is even more important, more so than ever," said Reyes.

How you can help: Volunteers ages 18 and older are needed to sort and price books year-round. The warehouse is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. every other Saturday. Weeknights and longer weekend hours can be arranged for larger groups of volunteers.

Book sale volunteers act as cashiers, baggers, re-sorters and security, as well as assist buyers with purchases in three-hour shifts during the sale. Call 847-221-7804 or visit littlecity.org.

—Phyllis Benson