

Read how Mimi got involved with BookSmiles!



I saw Larry's presentation at the Waste Wise Business Network webinar in Dec. 2023. I was so inspired by BookSmiles' mission because I love books and am passionate about recycling and sustainability. I am the chair of the Summit NJ Recycling Advisory Committee and serve on the Summit Environmental Commission as well as the Summit Free Market Steering Committee.

In my role on the Recycling Advisory Committee, one of the projects I manage is the Book Barn at the city recycling center. When I took that on in 2023, I realized that there was an excess of books donated to the book exchange versus the number of books taken by residents. At that time, any excess that was hard covered was being thrown away; only paperbacks could be recycled. This bothered me terribly - I could not bear it that books were being wasted - and I was looking for a solution. When I saw Larry's presentation, I saw a solution.

During 2024, I got to know Larry better and learned more about BookSmiles. I, personally, wanted to help Booksmiles achieve its mission and expand its reach. Books are so precious to me and I know how hard it is to re-home them! I kept coming up with ideas of ways people in my part of NJ could benefit from BookSmiles while benefiting BookSmiles!! I spread the word to all I knew, especially aging folks in my community who are downsizing. I wish I had known about BookSmiles' large estate library pickup service when I was cleaning out my mom's rooms full of books! Larry invited me to join the Development Committee which I enjoyed enormously. I spread the word about BookSmiles any chance I get; I've included it in a Recycling Resources flyer that sits on the City of Summit website <https://www.cityofsummit.org/civicsend/viewmessage/message/248595> and have talked about it at a decluttering lecture we had at my synagogue for seniors. Now, I plan to wear my BookSmiles shirt around town and hope it will spark many conversations!!

My coordination of the recent Fill the Truck event

I am a member of my synagogue's Social Action Committee. Last spring I suggested that we host a "Fill the Truck" event. I managed the whole project from our end which was so easy. I just did a lot of publicity and on that day, we collected over 5,000 books! It was easy!! I can't wait to do it again and am working with other local houses of worship to convince them to hold similar events.

Future plans to have a satellite BookSmiles facility to serve North Jersey.

Over the time that BookSmiles was picking up Summit's excess books, it occurred to me that it was a shame that books from North Jersey were being driven 80 miles south to be sorted and then often redistributed to social service organizations from Northern Jersey who would have to drive all the way to Pennsauken to pick up books. Wouldn't it be great if the empty truck coming for our books could bring deliveries for North Jersey groups? Larry and I talked about it and agreed that it would be amazing to have a Northern Jersey satellite. I will never forget the story of that teacher who teaches in Patterson who took Amtrak and Uber from NYC where she lives to get to BookSmiles so she could take a few suitcases of books back for her classroom. At this point, this is just a dream, but the need and the book supply are in place. All we need is money, a space and some people to make this happen. I tried talking some local non-profits into providing us with, at least, a drop-off/pick-up space, but have not been successful. Hopefully in the future!!

Mimi Zukoff, Chair

Summit Recycling Advisory Committee