

Interview with Teresa Capasso

Teresa Capasso, Librarian II at Larkspur Library, has "always been a reader and lover of libraries. My father was in the Air Force, and we moved around a lot, but we always went to the library wherever we lived. When he retired, the family moved to the Sacramento area, then the Salinas Valley."

Teresa has especially fond memories of the library in Coos Bay, Oregon, one of her father's postings. "We lived there for three years, and it rained a lot. The children's librarian there welcomed me and my sister so warmly.

We'd stay there for hours on end." What might she and her sister be reading then? "I read all of the Nancy Drew books at the library, and *The Secret Garden* was also a favorite."

Now she is a fan of historical fiction (she is currently reading *The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish, set in 17th century London and the present day) as well as non-fiction (she mentions authors Erik Larson and David McCullough).

After graduating from San Francisco State, she received a teaching credential and began working toward a certification as a reading specialist when she learned that self-selected reading was very beneficial to children as they learned to read. "It helped show me the importance of libraries in supporting literacy in a community."

While working at a local private school, she realized that she "wanted to be more hands-on" in connecting children with books and took a job in the school library at Marin Primary and Middle School. She found that experience "so positive" that she decided to get her master's degree in Library and Information Science at San Jose State, the closest school that offered an accredited program ("accreditation is very important"). While still in library school, she started working at the Larkspur Library part-time in 2003 (when Frances Gordon was director). Once she graduated with her master's, she was hired full-time. Working at the Larkspur Library was a natural transition as she was familiar with the community, and "I already knew a lot of Larkspur families from Marin Primary."

Her husband, Jon Capasso, works in the insurance industry in San Francisco's Financial District as a Senior Technology Analyst. They have two adult children, Alex, and Julia, who both live in the Bay Area.

There have been big changes since the coronavirus became a factor in everyone's lives. Virtual programming is the Larkspur Library's answer to a full slate of reader participation activities. Along with online toddler and babies story times ("It's so different without kids, but I'm getting better at it."), the Book Club still meets. "It's easy for our members to use Zoom, and our meetings seem more intimate. We can be with people in their homes and still have good discussions. The joy of book club is a good open discussion, and we have that. And several former members and Tamalpais residents are able to participate. Libraries are adapting slowly, and so is the public."

Since the stay-at-home order, the use of eBooks has "surged," and Teresa is sold on the idea of digital magazines. "What do you do with the old magazines anyway?" she asked. "We keep up with the newest formats, but we still keep the old formats too for those who love them." So yes, the library will continue to purchase actual books as well as electronic versions. The proportions may change though.

"Larkspur Library is able to tailor our collection to the needs and interests of the community," Teresa says. How so? "This is a very educated community, and we buy with that in mind. People here are very well read, she said. "They see a good review in The New York Times, for example, and they expect us to have the book available to check out." Scandinavian mysteries and travel books are especially popular with Larkspur readers.

Looking to the past, Teresa points out that the library was started in the early 1900s by a woman's improvement group who wanted a library for the community. "It was a private library to start, and its growth was so organic. The collection was given to the City and the Larkspur Library and is still serving the town all these years later. A pretty cool heritage."

Teresa envisions a future where the library is a crossroads of the community, continuing to serve as a place for people of all ages and for different generations of readers. A place for cultural events, for education, and leisure. The Commons "has a great location " near two schools and in

the heart of the community. It's nice to see people working toward that goal."