

Living books share special experiences

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FRANK is Kathy.

It sounds simple - or perhaps confusing. Either way, it's something a book could be made of.

And it is.

Kathy Noble of Cleveland is a 'living' library book, and you can 'borrow' Kathy at Garden City Library on Sunday, October 5.

But there are no set chapters, and no indexes or references to guide people - Kathy will simply share her experiences as a transsexual with borrowers.

Family and Community Services Chair, Geraldine Knapp, said the Living Library program aimed to challenge and overcome negative stereotypes, and is the latest weapon in the fight against community division and prejudice.

Cr Knapp said librarygoers had the opportunity to spend half an hour with a human book, who would share their stories of personal sacrifices, challenges, and endurance.

This is the third time Kathy has put herself out there to be borrowed.

"I like meeting people," the 74 year-old said.

"Being a living library book means I can meet some interesting people, enjoy the day, and also have people enjoy what I talk about, as well as passing on some basic understanding of what it's like to be a transsexual," Kathy said.

Yet it's taken a long time for Kathy to reach the point of sharing her experiences.

As Frank, a financial adviser for more than 40 years, Kathy said she listened to people and would come up with solutions to their problems.

Now she is simply trying to educate people about being a transsexual.

So do readers borrow her out of curiosity or a thirst for knowledge?

"People ask questions and want to learn," Kathy said.

Born in 1934 in the east end of London, Kathy - Frank at the time - realised at the age of six that something was different about her.

Frank set about making a masculine life for himself, joining the Royal Air Force, playing football, marrying, and having children - yet during this time, he was also cross-dressing.

"I thought I was the only person like me in the world," Kathy recalled.

Frank married twice and made a life for himself in Australia.

But in early 1999 while his second wife was away in Sydney, he shaved off his beard, and bought make-up and dresses.

After returning from Sydney, his wife knew something was amiss.

Then one day, things changed.

How does the rest of the story go?

You will just have to borrow Kathy yourself.

The Living Library will be held at Garden City Library on October 5 from 10.30am to 3pm, and there will be ten living books available.

Visit <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au> or 34038888.

<http://www.whereilive.com.au>

