



# The Stoneham Independent

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## Defying the giant retailers The Book Oasis; a literary haven for young and old *Winning over the Millennials*

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It is said you can't judge a book by its cover, but no one said anything about gauging a book store by its name. And since Stoneham's own independent book store in the square is such a lush literary haven, filled with thousands of titles of new and used, fiction and nonfiction, best-sellers and hard to find titles, and so much more, it's no wonder that The Book Oasis is the go-to location for locals as well as for readers all over Greater Boston.

As it approaches its 15th anniversary in Stoneham, The Book Oasis has much to celebrate, including having just topped the esteemed WGBH sponsored Boston A-List.

"We are proud to announce that the viewers of Channel 2 have voted us the best bookstore in Greater Boston...for the second year in a row and the third time since 2006," said Dan Sullivan who co-owns the business with wife Debbie.

The award is yet further testament to the success of independent bookstores like The Book Oasis and its importance to a community. In fact, Dan said, independent bookstores have been growing steadily since the closing of the book giant, Borders, an event some thought would mark the death of brick and mortar stores.

"Books are bought by people across the population," he said. "We have regulars that were toddlers when we opened and others in their 90's who enjoy our large print selection."

"We have noticed a return of the millennial reader as e-readers have lost their shine and market over the past 24 months," he added.

It's no wonder that The Book Oasis, located at 311 Main Street, is a local success story. For many people, perusing The Book Oasis is a visceral experience, one that engages many senses. The sight of so many books (over 30,000 titles) feels like the possibilities are endless, while the distinctive smell of a book and the feel of the pages between your fingers make for an enjoyable visit. Sometimes, it is as quiet as a library; other times boast the chatter of local conversation or talk of what people are currently reading. But you can be sure you won't have to traverse thousands of square feet to find what you want to read.

Another favorite feature of The Book Oasis is the collection of Debbie's handmade purses, baby clothes and hats that she expertly crafts. The store also offers a great collection of greeting cards, book marks, plush, puzzles and games.

The Sullivans, who consider themselves "incurable bookaholics," have a long history in the book business, be-



DEB AND DAN SULLIVAN

ginning in 1990 when they started selling books at flea markets, collectibles shows, and craft fairs. An online business in 1999 followed and in 2000 they formed an informal partnership with a now closed bookstore in Woburn. When their corporate jobs fell victim to downsizing, they dove full time in the book selling business.

It was a great match. Debbie's background in accounting and her affinity for books about mummies, plagues, and science, along with Dan's expertise in importing and exporting and a weakness for history and the Civil War, was the recipe that has turned them into successful business owners and their Book Oasis into a model for other small businesses.

"Opening the brick and mortar store became something we almost HAD to do," Dan said. "The recommended seed stock for a new store is 5,000 titles. We had that plus some!"

The Book Oasis opened its doors in 2002 and has been a mainstay in Stoneham ever since. The Sullivans are active in the community, making sure to stock summer readings lists for schools in a 20-mile radius of the Main Street establishment, as well keeping up to date on what is assigned during the school year.

It also offers school book fairs through Fantastic Book Fairs

"No junk, no fuss is our motto and it has been incredibly well received by parents, teachers and PTO's."

And it continues to grow.

"Our reach has expanded much further up Route 28 and into the city in the last year and have regular visits from customers in New Hampshire and Rhode Island."

The Book Oasis just participated in its highlight event, The Stoneham Chamber of Commerce's Halloween Stroll.

For more information on The Book Oasis, visit thebookoasis.com or call Deb or Dan at 781-438-0077.