

# Getting to Know TC

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Hi, I'm TC Storey. I am the Coordinator for BOOK Readers.

When I entered college, my dream was to work with and educate young children; however, my life took a detour. I spent 24 years with US West Communications, but about half of that time I was able to help the community by representing US West working with the United Way. As a campaign coordinator I was able to visit many sites seeing many people that were in the need of help.

When I left US West, I still had the personal need to be involved, helping the community and also the education of our youth. When my family moved to New Mexico I worked for the Belen Schools as a substitute teacher. My eyes again were opened a little wider. So many children were struggling to read, and many of those that could read were far below grade level.

I read a book written by Jim Trelease; he is a world renowned expert on Literacy. He is a public speaker and has written several books. The statistics he quotes are astounding. For example: children from high and middle income families on the average know 20,000 words upon entering the 1<sup>st</sup> grade compared to children from low-income families, who on the average know 5000 words. Children from middle income families own an average of 6-8 books each. For low-income families the ratio is 1 book to each 300 children.

By the age of 4 children from a professional family hear 45 million words; 26 million words are heard by children from working class families, and this is compared to only 13 million words heard by children living in poverty. I concluded that although I believe that it is never too late to learn to read, it is certainly never too early to be read to.

Our goals at BOOK are to reach the families that need our help. When you compare the love that parents have for their children, there is no difference from the high to low-income families. The difference is found in the accessibility of books and the knowledge of the parents

regarding the importance of reading to their children. Studies show that these are two of the major educational problems facing the lower-income families.

We at BOOK address both of these problems. We provide training to the staff at the WIC and First Choice Healthcare Clinics. The training provides the staff with the necessary information and skills to talk with parents about the importance of reading to their children. We also provide new books to the clinics. The staff gives the parents a new book so that they will be able to read to their children at home.



Amanda and Angela Storey reading to children

We also have volunteer readers. Volunteers from the community go into the clinics to read to the children as they are waiting for appointments. This exposes the children and their parents to the joy of reading and listening to stories.

One day, I was reading to a child in one of the WIC centers. As I was reading I noticed the very young mother was watching me with interest. After I had read the book, the mother commented that she was surprised her child would sit quietly for the amount of time to hear the entire book. I was able to talk to her about reading to her child, along with all the many benefits of reading. I told her that to develop the habit of reading to children every day is the first step in giving the child the love of reading. She seemed to be very excited about starting to read to her child.

I am certain that we are making a difference in the world of the children we help. We are doing this one child at a time.