

Transcription of Podcast Episode 396: Julie Ebreck, Read with Me Volunteer

SPEAKERS

Bob Firing, Julie Ebreck

Note: This transcription was computer-generated and may contain typographical errors.

Bob Firing 00:00

Good morning, Shadow Hills. Well, the new we are into the new year. And I'm back with another volunteer opportunity. Last year, I was asking for money. This year, we're not asking for money this year, we're only asking for time. One of the organizations that I recruit for is an organization called Read with Me. And Read with Me is an organization that was begun about 20 years ago, where English speaking adults work with Spanish speaking children, elementary school children, learning to read. And so, this was started, as I say, 20 years ago, and they were doing really well. They're going to, I don't know, 20 schools all the way down into way past Coachella. And then COVID closed them all down. And for a couple of years, nobody could go into the classroom. And although we're back, many volunteers are needed, because they're trying to expand to help even more kids than they had in the past. And so, I've done podcasts before about the value of the organization. But I have a guest in here today, who's going to talk about what it's like to be a volunteer. And my guest today is Julie Ebreck. Julie, welcome to the podcast.

Julie Ebreck 01:36

Thanks so much.

Bob Firing 01:38

So, before we get into your experience with Read with Me to tell us about your work experience and what you had done prior to, Julie's a resident by the way, and so prior to moving here.

Julie Ebreck 01:53

So, I spent the majority of my career in higher education. I was director of academic personnel and human resources for three different universities. The last one was at the University of California at San Diego. And I worked for the medical school and recruited doctors from all over the world, worked with residents, fellows, visiting scholars, lots of lots of different people from different countries, created a lot of mentorship programs for students and faculty and staff. And I retired right before the pandemic. And after the pandemic was over my husband and I decided to just shake up our life. And we sold our house in San Diego when I moved here to Shadow Hills. And so that was in August of 2022.

Bob Firing 03:01

And you responded to one of the solicitations that I put out on Next Door.

Julie Ebreck 03:07

That's right.

Bob Firing 03:09

And so, what happened?

Julie Ebreck 03:11

So, I contacted you, you were really great about getting me connected to the program. It was a really easy process to put in your application. You were sent to print materials on some of the techniques to help students learn to read. And then there was some online training that that you could do. And then I was assigned to a classroom, and I started last year in the winter. And did one started one day a week for two hours in the afternoon. And so, I was assigned to this lovely teacher and at JFK elementary school and had second graders. So, it was really, you know, an interesting process because some of the kids were exceptional readers, maybe reading at fifth or sixth grade level. And some of the kids literally couldn't read at all, they, you know, would be able to figure out a few words but it was slow going. So, the teacher assigned me individually to one student at a time so I only focused on maybe in my two hours I would have six students for 10 or 15 minutes. And, you know, I always felt like my career in higher ed was important that what we were doing mattered, and I'm sure it did, but nothing has compared to doing Read with Me in my life. I mean, this has been the most rewarding experience I I've ever had. You know, I had this little boy who he always wanted to read books about mechanics or, you know, engines or how mechanisms worked. And so there was one day when he finally figured out that T I O N was "tion" sound. So, he could figure out what traction meant an action and fraction. And it was like this whole new world opened up to him. Because that just that little portion of a word open opened up all kinds of words to him, it was just, you know, it's just an awesome experience, watching a child have their world open up through books, and I've loved the experience, Bob, and thank you so much for, for putting out the ad because honestly, this has been the most rewarding experience in my life.

Bob Firing 03:40

That's great. And are you still volunteering one day a week?

Julie Ebreck 06:44

This year, I'll do two days a week starting next week. We travel quite a bit, if you know. And so, we were in Italy for a month in the fall. So, I could only do one, one day a week then. But I'll start two days a week. And I have asked to stay with the same second grade teacher who is just an exceptional person and an exceptional teacher. So, it's been really fabulous.

Bob Firing 07:16

That's great. And how do you work with one student at a time? How long have you typically stayed with one student before moving on to another?

Julie Ebreck 07:26

Well, usually, I'm, I'm with a student for about 10 minutes. And then the next student rotates in. And so, it seems like I'll get three students that are good readers and three students that are less than at grade level. And so, you know, we can finish two books with the good readers, and maybe only half a book with the students that are not at grade level. But even last year, in the short time that I did it, I saw an

amazing difference in the students that weren't at grade level, how much they advanced, by the end of the time of reading it, it really was just paying attention to the fact that they had to sound out the words and read to me. And, you know, reading to you is a whole different experience than having somebody, an adult, read to children, it's a, you know it, the book will bring out all kinds of things in their own life that they want to talk to you about. And what may be the experience of the animal in the book reminds them of their cat or their dog at home or grandma, it's you know, it's they're very open and loving about their lives. And it's, it's yeah.

Bob Firing 09:16

So, you were a professional educator. But for people who aren't professional educator, and maybe have never taught anything, but their own children to read, what is there can anybody go in there?

Julie Ebreck 09:32

Anybody can go in there because you're not really teaching anybody to read. You're they're reading to you, they have you know, they have some skill set on in reading and hopefully they're either at grade level or below grade level. But you know, the books that that the teacher chooses for each child to read is really at their ability. And so, the more the more you encourage them to sound, because there's no rush to know even if you only get through three pages, the fact that they sound out the words and figure out what the sentence really means. Anybody can do this. It's anyone.

Bob Firing 10:30

Great. Well, not to put words in your mouth. But you had told me before that after working with some of the smartest people in the world, you found this to be the most rewarding thing you've ever done professionally.

Julie Ebreck 10:44

Absolutely true. Absolutely true.

Bob Firing 10:46

Well, thank you for coming in and telling your story. I'm not going to kid you the requirements, there are a few more requirements than there had been in the past because Read Eith Be is now under the auspices of the Desert Sands Unified School District. And they now are requiring you to be fingerprinted before going into the classroom. It's not a big deal. But it's more than they required last year. And as Julie has said that the rewards are many times what you're going to put into it. So well thank you for coming in and telling us your story. Hopefully this will resonate with some people, and there's plenty of need out there. So, for the audience, thank you for your attention. Till next time, bye-bye.