



adrienne ❖ schatz

imagination

Adrienne Schatz grew up in a loving home where books were valued and always available. Now at age 29, this social entrepreneur wants to make sure all kids have books of their own to read at home.

Adrienne is the founder of Book Trust, a unique nonprofit organization that puts books in the hands of the children of low-income families in five states.

Book Trust came to being five years ago, with the initial support of the Serimus Operating Foundation, a philanthropic organization launched by Adrienne's parents.

Adrienne smiles as she talks about her parents, Doug and Jill Schatz.

"They started out as a wonderful hippie couple from northern California," she said. "My dad was trying to figure out what he really wanted to do...it was between electronics/semi-conductor industry and opening a restaurant."

The family moved to Fort Collins when Adrienne was 3 and her dad went the electronics route, forming Advanced Energy. Her mom worked hard as a stay-at-home mom and went on to become a co-founder of the Discovery Center and executive director of the Serimus Foundation.

With a financial gift through the foundation, Doug and Jill propelled Adrienne into her current role of social entrepreneur. They asked only that Adrienne use the money for a social cause of her own choosing.

Adrienne lights up when she talks about the passion for reading that led to the creation of the Book Trust.

"I love books," she said. "My first job was at Stone Lion Bookstore and I worked at three bookstores after that."

She explained how her own love of reading sparked the idea of how to put the financial gift to good use.

"I loved Scholastic book catalogs when I was a kid," she said. "I had this moment of realization that when the kids in my class never

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To find out more about Book Trust visit www.booktrust.org

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"I liked picking out my own books. Now, I have a big pile of books in my house. I read my books with my little sister. Sometimes I let her read books by herself. Thanks again for all the great books." ❖Ruth

from
www.booktrust.org

"I still have all my books and no one can take them from me." ❖David

"I know what books I'm going to read in the summer. I'm definitely going to read all the books I have ordered. I know summer is a time for fun outside, but I'm not going to goof off. I'm reading. Reading is my favorite. I have been sharing all my books to everyone in my house. I have been loving all of the books." ❖Tomas

chose books, it wasn't because they didn't want to, it was because they couldn't afford it."

Adrienne's idea was to give children who can't afford to buy their own books from the Scholastic catalog a credit of \$7 each month to spend on any books they want. The program would begin with students when they are in kindergarten and continue until they reach the sixth grade.

She presented her simple idea to the Serimus Foundation board and Book Trust was born.

After some extensive research, she determined that if the idea worked, it would carry over into academic performance. She found that access to books in the home is the primary indicator of literacy skill and that 61 percent of low-income families have no books in the home.

"There is no way you can read more and not improve academically," she said. "Our focus is on the joy of the program and the opportunity to read, but it spills over naturally to doing better in school."

So with the help of the Serimus Foundation, Adrienne headed to her former elementary school, Cache LaPoudre Elementary, where she approached two first grade teachers with the hope of

launching a pilot program in their classes.

Letters explaining the Book Trust were given to all the students in the class. Those parents who felt their children needed the program signed a participation slip and sent it back to school. It was as simple as that. When it came time each month to order books from Scholastic, the children picked their \$7 worth of books, returned the order form to the teacher and it was taken care of from there.

"What we like is giving the children the power to choose and go shopping," she said. "A lot of these kids do not normally get that opportunity. Ownership is a great motivator, and if you get them hooked (on reading) at an early age it carries through."

Now, five years later, Book Trust is in 11 schools in Fort Collins. In four of the city's schools with the highest need, all eligible students participate. Book Trust is also providing books for students in Greeley and Loveland, as well for students at a handful of schools in Hawaii, New Hampshire, New York and Texas.

The results from this one idea have been amazing.

"Book Trust has leveled the gap that you usually find between more affluent demographics and lower income demo-

graphics in terms of how much kids love reading and how much they read at home on their own," Adrienne said.

She hopes Book Trust gets kids excited about reading and keeps them in the "game" their entire life.

Currently, Book Trust serves over 4,000 students. Adrienne recently met with Scholastic to encourage their support.

"This last meeting is opening up the door for us to become a national organization," she said. "We are still working out the nitty gritty. But this partnership with Scholastic will allow us to reach so many children."

Book Trust has come a long way in five years and Adrienne is quick to credit those who helped it along.

"I am very proud of having this spark of an idea, but I was surrounded by the people and the resources to make this happen," she said.

When asked what she wants to see happen with Book Trust in the next 10 years, without hesitation she says: "It becomes a national program that reaches all eligible children in the United States."

With her dedication and commitment as executive director, Adrienne is well on her way to reaching her goal. ❖