

Joseph Thomas Bryant Memorial Scholarship

Reading has been a source of great joy in my life! When I had children, I was excited for them to experience this same joy. My husband and I eagerly read to our children, hoping to plant the seeds of literacy deep inside. When our second child struggled with reading, I began an intensive search for methods to allow him to unlock the power of the written word. I tried various phonics programs, consulted with other experts in the reading field and furiously tried to find answers.

A tragic sequence of events led me to the answer. Our friends, Mark and Joyce Bryant experienced the overwhelming loss of six of their nine children in an accidental explosion. A few months later, while visiting with them, Joyce recounted how she had taken Joseph, their ten year old, to a reading center in Michigan the day before he died. Her excitement was evident as she relayed the strides Joseph made in reading after spending one day with the director of the center, Nora Chahbazi. As a fellow homeschooling mom, I knew in my heart what that meant to her. I stored that nugget of information in my head and continued to try to find a way for my son to achieve literacy.

A few weeks before Thanksgiving 2006, it dawned on me what we needed to do. I called Joyce, soliciting information about the reading center. She gave me the information about the Ounce of Prevention Reading center and spoke in such glowing terms of Nora Chahbazi and the staff, that it sent a spark of optimism through me. We had planned to spend Thanksgiving with our Ohio relatives and it made perfect sense to extend our trip from North Carolina northward into Michigan. At that point in time, I honestly would have traveled to the other side of the world if I thought it would help my son read. Oh how I longed for him to derive the same pleasure that I did from reading. Still, I remained cautious, not wanting to get my hopes up too high.

On November 21, we arrived at the Ounce of Prevention Reading Center. The whole staff was absolutely wonderful! Nora immediately began working with our son. She began unlocking doors that had been closed, and igniting the spark of literacy in his mind. They worked intensely for hours. At one break, I asked Nora if she thought our son would read fluently. When she affirmed my hopes, tears filled my eyes. I had not realized until then how intensely I longed for our son to know the joy of reading. I see that day as a turning point in his life.

Since returning home, we have been following the methods that Nora outlined for us. We are seeing great progress not only in our son's ability to read, but the joy and excitement that he experiences with reading. As a homeschooling mom, surrounded by a large community of homeschoolers, I am well aware that our son is not alone in his struggles to achieve literacy. Other homeschooling moms already want more information on how they too, can help unlock the mystery of reading for their children who struggle. I would be honored to be able to pass such knowledge and information on to others who have experienced the same heartbreaking worries over their children. As a recipient of the scholarship for EBLI training, I would be my honor and privilege to bear the torch for Joseph Thomas Bryant. Thank you for considering my request.

Mary C. Lucas