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family magazine



Lilly the Lash[®]

Author Julie Woik
Makes Reading

FUNdamental

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AT THE
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INSIDE: THE BEST SUMMER CAMPS FOR YOUR KIDS...

Actually... Children *do* Still Read!

WORDS: Julie Woik



It is funny how many times I've been approached at a book signing, most often by someone having grown up in the 'I walked five miles to school uphill' generation, who disappointingly utters, "Kids don't read anymore. They don't do anything but play on their electronic devices. Our world is a mess!" My reaction is always the same. I smile ever so gently, take their point of view to heart, and then proceed to enlighten them by kindly and simply replying, "Actually...children DO still read!"

I'm Julie Woik; author of the successful children's book series, *The Life and Times of Lilly the Lash*®. I can give this informative response for three reasons. The first reason is that I've met hundreds of thousands of children through my many author experiences, and what I've learned is that lots and lots of children like to read. Does every child like to read? No. But the good news is, many of them do, and that number is growing stronger every single day.

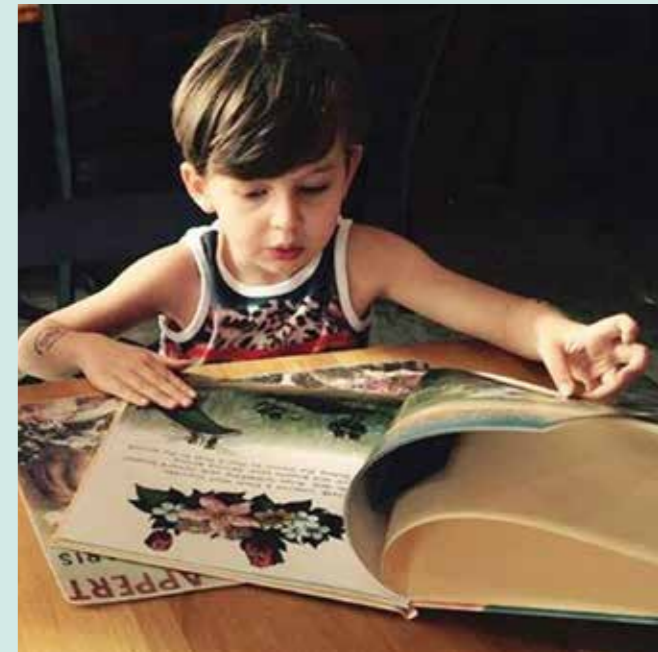
Electronics are part of our society. They're part of our daily existence. They provide convenience and functionality, and as it appears for the moment, they're here to stay. While presenting at schools, students will inevitably ask me what I think of our

many digital gadgets. I get the sense that they're expecting me to say something along the lines of "They're bad for you! You should be reading instead!"

Ultimately they seem surprised that I feel as I do; which is, with parental monitoring, it's a great thing that children are learning how to operate all of these tools. They can use the internet to "Google" for information, they can use their mobile phones to call for help in an emergency, they can play suitable video games to develop fantastic eye-hand coordination, and knowing how to properly manage all of these different contraptions will unquestionably widen their employment prospects for one day not so far into the future.

We do, of course, need to make sure we have one thing in place – BALANCE. These magnificent machines are all fine and dandy, but we need to make sure that we take a break, and put them down. We need to be social; to connect face to face. We need to be alone; to dream. We need to read a good book. We need to laugh with friends and family over dinner.

We need to be caring – hold a hand, share a smile, wipe a tear. Many of the children I meet who enjoy reading also have access to a phone, laptop, or iPad, yet they're still using their own free time for this activity that some feel, has faded. Somewhere, somehow, they're embracing that invisible balance. When I inquire as to how they've come to be so interested in reading, "my parents" or "my teacher" are the frequent responses.



Parents, I must say, are the second reason I'm able to so confidently declare, "Actually...children DO still read!" I've discovered in my travels that tons of parents read to their children from day one, or in some cases, before they're even born.

The child may be too young to understand the words, but there's something wonderfully soothing about rocking and reading to a precious infant resting in your arms. And although those words may not be spoken by that child for years to come, their exposure to the language itself serves as the seed that grows the love of reading; transforming the attentive infant into a vivacious reader.



Books that rhyme are exceptionally helpful, as rhyming is fun to say, fun to hear, and helps children learn words more easily. But in reality, any book can stimulate that all-important love of reading. Parents are excited to be opening this door to their children, and as a bonus, they get to reap the benefit of that deep, magical bond created by those special intimate moments. Moments that, for all involved, will NEVER be forgotten!

One of the best perks of my job is having the opportunity to meet the most spirited children one could ever imagine. Some of them are excellent readers, some not so much. Some want to be better readers, some, not so much.

I love to chat with them about how much they read, what they like to read about, and what they like, or don't like, about reading. I love to explain to them how reading will make them smarter, and build them a ridiculously rad vocabulary. I love watching their faces light up when I tell them that reading will make them more mature. (Everyone wants to be more mature...well, until we reach about 39 that is!)

The children are very sincere and go into great detail in our conversa-

tions, but sooner or later, one subject always seems to surface – their teacher.

Teachers, without a doubt, are the third reason I can unequivocally assure people that "Actually...children DO still read!" While exchanging information with these children as I do, they'll lovingly speak about the teacher or teachers in their lives, who make learning and reading a joy.

They'll describe, for example, how they might have struggled in this class or that class, and how a teacher encouraged them to do better; often suggesting becoming a stronger reader, as it would help them in other ways as well. "Don't worry about what your classmates are reading," a child quoted his teacher's as saying, "just find a book that looks fun and start reading! Read at your own level."

This, from a very bright and animated seven-year-old boy, who prior to this repeated nudging, claimed he never liked books because he was embarrassed by how slowly he read. Presently he's reading nine books a week, and he's shouting it from the roof tops!!

When you're growing up, I don't think you understand or appreciate what a teacher does for you. Even if you loved your teacher, as I have loved so many, that understanding doesn't fully come into view until much later in life.

Over the years, I've met endless volumes of amazingly, dedicated educators who've brought me to tears by the stories told by them, about them, or by witnessing their selfless sacrifices, just to brighten the lives

of the students in their classrooms. My understanding and appreciation, are now quite vast.

So, you see, when someone approaches me with a comment like "Kids don't read anymore; our world is a mess", I can certainly understand where their concerns lie, however I just can't help myself from sharing the hope I see and feel every day. Children, parents, and teachers indeed, are the reasons I can say "Actually...children DO still read!" 🙌

