ColoREADo Is Helping Colorado's Children Unlock the Power of Reading

SUBMITTED BY HILLTOP RESIDENT, SHARI MOST

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, Hilltop resident Shari Most has worked with children who struggle to read. Again and again, she watched students work hard, receive quality instruction and still fall behind their classmates. While the methods she used were considered the "gold standard," she couldn't shake the feeling that there had to be a better way. Then she discovered Evidence Based Literacy Instruction, or EBLI.

The science-based approach transformed what she believed was possible—not just for students with dyslexia, but for children of all learning abilities. More importantly, it helped students make remarkable progress in reading and writing at a pace she had never seen before.

"I knew we had something that could truly change lives," Shari said. That realization became the foundation for ColoREADo, the nonprofit she and her daughter, Tal, launched to combat illiteracy and sub-literacy across Colorado.

Their mission is ambitious: eliminate illiteracy by giving students access to effective instruction while equipping teachers with the tools and training they need to help every child succeed.

The inspiration came not only from the students Shari had already helped but also from the countless children she hadn't met. "The majority of students in our state are not reading proficiently at grade level," she said. "I kept thinking about the families who couldn't afford private tutoring."

Both Shari and Tal had witnessed the impact of EBLI firsthand. Tal, who was teaching in Boston at the time, found that some of her greatest classroom successes came from using the method with struggling readers. When the opportunity arose to return to Denver, the pair decided to build something bigger than a tutoring practice.

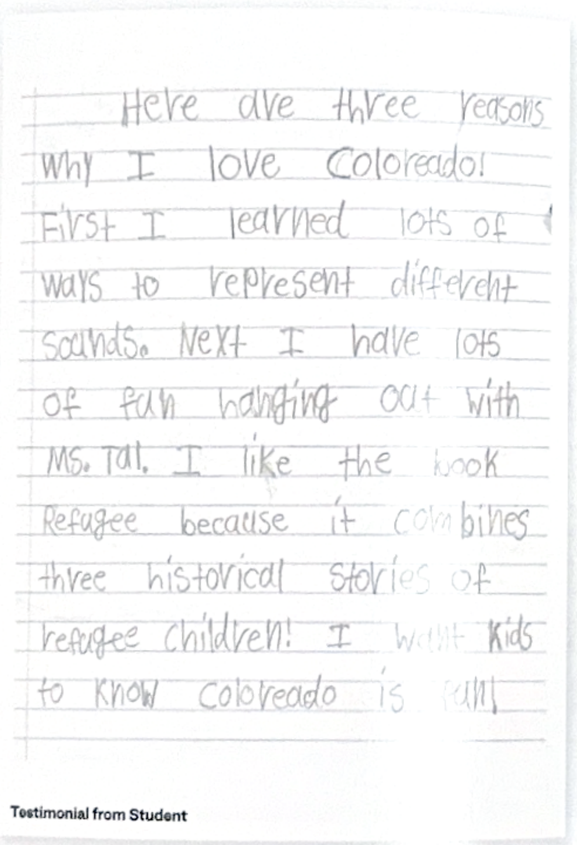
With encouragement from Shari's husband, Matt, guidance from EBLI founder Nora Chahbazi, and generous financial support from Shelby Carlson and Brock Berry, ColoREADo became a reality. Those early donations allowed the nonprofit to hire Tal and provide EBLI scholarships to its first cohort of nine teachers. In its very first year, the organization reached approximately 100 students.

Today, ColoREADo continues to expand its impact through the newly opened ColoREADo Literacy Clinic on the Clayton Early Learning campus. The nonprofit provides direct tutoring for K-12 students, offers scholarships and mentorship for teachers learning EBLI, and is committed to ensuring that a family's ability to pay never determines whether a child receives literacy instruction.

For Shari, one former student perfectly illustrates why the work matters. When they first met, the student was reading more than two years below grade level. After receiving EBLI instruction, she not only became a confident reader but also discovered a passion for writing. Today, she is a published poet and youth activist in the Northern Arapaho community, has spoken at the Denver Indian Center and city council meetings, interviewed with *The Denver Post*, appeared on the radio and even traveled with Shari to Philadelphia to share her story with educators.

Student

Student


Testimonial from Student

"Watching students find their voice is extraordinary," Shari said.

She believes literacy is about far more than reading books. Illiteracy and sub-literacy are linked to reduced economic opportunity, poorer health outcomes and higher incarceration rates. Everyday tasks—from understanding medical information to completing job applications or participating fully in civic life—become far more difficult without strong literacy skills.

"Literacy opens doors," she said. "It makes all other learning possible and is essential to our democracy."

Shari and a student

Tal and a student

Looking ahead, Shari and Tal hope to bring EBLI to hundreds more students while sharing the approach with educators, school leaders and policymakers across Colorado.

Hilltop residents can support ColoREADo by visiting the literacy clinic, attending the nonprofit's open houses, sponsoring a student or educator, volunteering their time or expertise, or simply helping spread the word about the importance of literacy.

For Shari, every child deserves the chance to experience the confidence that comes with learning to read. And thanks to ColoREADo, more Colorado children are getting exactly that opportunity.

Learn more at coloreado.org.

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