Reach Out and Read Podcast Transcript: "Generational Gratitude for Reading"
with Sharon Moody, Andrea Deaton, and Kate Schafstall

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:00:00] Reach Out and Read, where books build better brains. This is the Reach Out and Read Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, a practicing pediatrician with degrees in public health and children's librarianship. I'm a clinical professor of human development and family studies at the School of Human Ecology and a professor of pediatrics at the School of Medicine and Public Health, both at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. At Reach Out and Read, we dream of a world in which every child is read to every day. Our show explores how children and families flourish and thrive through a combination of individual well-being, confident parents, supportive communities, strong public health, and good policy. Join us here for thought-provoking conversations on these issues with expert guests, authors, and leaders in the field of early childhood health and literacy. Research shows that reading physical books together brings the strongest benefits to children. That's why we're happy to have Boise Paper, a responsible paper manufacturer, as the founding sponsor of this podcast through their paper with Purpose Promise Boise Paper looks for ways to make a difference in local communities. Thank you to Boise Paper for investing in our Reach Out and Read community.

Sharon Moody: [00:01:16] Hi, my name is Sharon. I'm 82 years old and I'm the mother of Andrea and the grandmother of Kate.

Andrea Deaton: [00:01:25] And I'm Andrea. I'm 65 years old. Sharon is my mom and Caitlyn is my daughter.

Kate Schafstall: [00:01:33] Hi, I'm Kate. I'm 34 years old. Andrea is my mother, and Sharon is my grandma. We are lucky enough to live in the same town in Norman, Okla. Andrea and Sharon live on the same street, and I live about ten minutes away with my husband, BJ, and my son Oliver.

Andrea Deaton: [00:01:50] And as three generations of women who have loved reading to our children and being read to as children ourselves, we were asked to participate in Reach Out and Read's Thanksgiving episode. We're so grateful to be here, to have each other, and to have books and

shared reading be such a large part of our lives. Mom, what was it like when you were a child? What are your earliest memories of reading?

Sharon Moody: [00:02:20] I really don't have any memories of my mother reading to me, but I do understand now the reasons for that. I grew up in the ‘40s and ‘50s, and family life and society were different then. Most homes didn't have labor-saving devices of today, so mom's day was filled with cooking, and cleaning, and washing, and ironing, and everything else related to family life. At the end of the day, she was just exhausted, but she always made sure we had something to read in the house. I can even remember turning the pages of Look magazine and trying to understand the words. And then, she bought a World Book Encyclopedia and a Webster's Dictionary. And the whole world opened before my eyes. What a wonderful time I had reading those pages. My brother Roy, who was 15 months older, always had comic books: Lone Ranger, and, Dick Tracy, and Flash Gordon, and Buck Rogers. And I may have learned to read with Dick and Jane, but I had true adventures with those guys. At first my brother read to me, but soon I was reading on my own. And then came my first Nancy Drew mystery and I had a heroine, not just heroes. As a matter of fact, I still read mysteries today. Mom took us to the public library every week, and we brought home as many books as the librarian would allow. And of course, we enrolled in the summer reading program every year. We lived in the country with no neighbors nearby, and those books were our friends. Many a summer day was spent stranded on a desert island, or trekking through the jungle, or solving the mystery of the old clock, or even imagining travel in space, or talking into a device on my wrist. Imagine that. I loved books then, and I love books now. Andrea, you were a child of the ‘60s. What are your first memories of reading?

Andrea Deaton: [00:04:26] So, I think the one thing that I remember clearly is that I could read before I started school, and I thought everyone could read before they started school. And I was very surprised when I got there that my teacher in the first grade was very surprised that I could read. And I just always remember reading. I always remember having a book with me in the car, wherever we were going —kind of like Rory Gilmore. Right, Kate? Always have a book when you're when you need it, when you're ready to go.

Kate Schafstall: [00:05:05] Yes.

Andrea Deaton: [00:05:06] And so, I really remember reading a lot of books to you, Kate. Our bedtime routine was reading books, and that's just still such a fond memory to me and so cozy. That was just something that was so consistent throughout your childhood — was we read books at night and I still read a book at night, usually before I go to bed. What do you remember, Kate, about early reading?

Kate Schafstall: [00:05:37] I have such strong memories of reading with both of you guys. We had made this perfect cozy canopy bed. I don't know if either of you guys remember that. It had the fabric and the lights, and I remember curling up in there with you guys, and it was a safe and content part of my day. That's what I remember. I don't remember specific stories or what books we would read. I think I remember just feeling that cozy comfort at the end of the day. Those are my earliest memories. And then, kind of like grandma was saying, too —really remember the summer reading program at the library. Me and my friend, Kayla, had an intense competition. I remember filling out the log with the page numbers, the books, and being so excited for when they would release the theme of the summer. The best theme ever was the fairy tale one. There was a big paper mâché dragon. I don't know. I've just been reminiscing about that a lot, and those are probably my two biggest, earliest memories. And I can definitely tell the love of the library stayed, like reminiscing and all the things kind of ties back. We have a little free library in our yard. And I think that love has been fun to curate with Oliver, my son. He likes to go out there and make sure there's kid books. He is very upset when he realizes the kid books have been taken. He likes to, then, go put new ones out there for other kids to also get. It's been very special.

Andrea Deaton: [00:07:27] That's so sweet. You say you don't remember a specific book, but I remember a time that really sticks with me. And it was — you were maybe four or five —and I had an eye injury. And I had to keep my eyes closed. I couldn't open my eyes, but it was bedtime. And we read books at bedtime. And so, we started our book routine and I said, "Kate, I can't read to you tonight, but you can read to me. You go get a book that you can read to me." And you went and got the book, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors." And I don't know that you actually read it, or if you had it memorized, but you had all of the characters down. You had all of the words. You turned the pages at the right time. And to me, that is just such a clear memory that, "Okay, we've got this right. This kid is going to be a reader." Because even if I didn't think you were paying attention when we read, you totally were.

Kate Schafstall: [00:08:35] That is funny because we do still have that book on our bookshelf. And actually, now that I'm thinking about it, I might not remember reading them when I was a kid, but I do now pick them up and say, "Oh, that's from my childhood in preparation to read it to Oliver." What do you think I inspired you or made you want to keep some of those?

Andrea Deaton: [00:09:02] You know, there were several books that we had, and they weren't necessarily the —I don't know — maybe, the books you would think about. They were just the books that I felt like you grabbed at night, like we talked about "The Panda Palace" or "Who Would Care for The

Sandwich?" And the ones that —you just loved it when I made the noises, and the voices, and that you would make them —or if I left something out, you would tell me. I don't remember because we had a lot of books and I know I only saved, you know, a few for you. But at the time, I think that I was just very biased. What I'd buy I believe was very biased toward me and what made me feel good. And I think that, or I know, I have books from my childhood that your grandma saved for me. And they definitely weren't my favorite books, but I read them to Oliver now. And they were the books that we always read together, and that we enjoyed together. And I think it was the feeling more than the content. Wouldn't you say, Mom, for the ones like we talked about — "Farmer Brown" and we talked about "The Poky Little Puppy," and "The Shy Little Kitten?" We have a lot of those Golden Books that I still read to Oliver.

Sharon Moody: [00:10:32] Yeah, we can spare Kate another recitation of the two of us alternating reading The Farmer Brown" from memory —which we can do —but so many of the books and it wasn't just the specific titles. It was the genre of the books. You know, when I talked about what was available to me in the way of books is so different than what was available to you. Women were never heroines until Nancy Drew came along. Well, you could count "Little Women," but they weren't heroines. So, you could move on from there.

Andrea Deaton: [00:11:13] I beg to differ.

Sharon Moody: [00:11:14] Well, I know you would, but we're not going there because it's my turn. But I still read mysteries today, and love reading mysteries. And that goes back to Nancy Drew and, you know, The Hardy Boys. And I mean, we did the boxcar kids, but we didn't have magic stories unless you count the Brothers Grimm —and they were too grim to be magic, in my opinion. So, I don't still have any books. I would give anything if we still had that encyclopedia. I'd sit down and read it, today. I think reading encyclopedias is necessary for every child. I'm sure, Kate, that Oliver has told you about us reading encyclopedias.

Kate Schafstall: [00:12:05] Oh, definitely —his dinosaur, his space, his big book of animals. I definitely think your love of encyclopedias has translated down to him, as well. Mom, what would you say? Grandma's saying that mystery was present in childhood, still present today. She likes to read. What have you found yourself gravitating towards?

Andrea Deaton: [00:12:35] I really like historical fiction —big, sweeping family sagas. I love those. And then, a sprinkle of rom-com thrown in there. I love a good, strong female character and I really look for themes of resilience —or maybe, that's just those themes of resilience are what's in historical fiction, the

sweeping dramas. A few of my favorite authors right now: Kate Quinn, Emily Henry. Of course, I love TJ Klune, just to throw another in there. So, just a wide, wide array. But I really lean more towards historical fiction in the sweeping dramas, which we share a little bit. But then, you have a whole different avenue where you are today.

Kate Schafstall: [00:13:33] Yeah, I would say I'm kind of, you know —grandma really likes the mystery. She's the one-track. I'm a little bit more like you, where I bounce around quite a bit. I think starting in middle school and high school, I sought out those similar stories of resilience, of hope, of finding people where you fit in. I remember John Green. I've read all of his books, probably eight to ten times, each. I think I needed that. I would say, though, today I am very varied in my reading —thanks to my book club. We do rom-com, historical fiction, cozy fantasy, really just whatever the girls are in the mood for.

Sharon Moody: [00:14:23] Sometimes, you read weird things and recommend them.

Kate Schafstall: [00:14:27] I would just say that it's different, not weird. But I have learned that you are not a Sci-Fi recommendation girly. You like what you like. My mom and I can go back and forth a little bit, but there are some where she loses me because I need my hope to be a little hope-ier, sometimes. I would definitely say, though, that if I'm left to my own devices, I'm going to pick up a fantasy — a Sci-Fi, a lit RPG, something of that right now. And I think that really speaks to what you said earlier of the "where is literature headed" and what's present now. I love stories of change in society and those big pieces, and it's been fun to see Oliver kind of step into that same adventure and fantasy genre. I don't know if it's me curating his books, or if it's what he naturally gravitates toward, but it's been fun to share that. I like to watch that happen and grow.

Andrea Deaton: [00:15:49] And have you kept, do you have, a bedtime routine with Oliver, Kate?

Kate Schafstall: [00:15:56] Oh, yes. And he is so upset if it deviates from that routine. But we do either two books or two chapters every night during our bedtime. And there for a long time, kind of like you said earlier, I wondered, "Okay, is he listening? Is this enjoyable to him — because he is a wiggly, wiggly worm, and would be messing with stuffies or touching the wall, whatever it is." But if you pause and you ask him what's happening in the story? Quick like a whip, he can tell you. And so, I've learned that even though his body and brain might seem elsewhere, that he really is in that routine and the stories with me. And I think, if I had to describe what that looks and feels

like is, again, how it felt to me when I was a kid. It's cozy. It's safe, and it's connection. And I can't imagine our day to day without that.

Sharon Moody: [00:17:02] When I moved to Norman six years ago, it was the intent that I'd be with my family. And I'm grateful that even if we don't read books together, we talk about books — not just on this podcast, but we talk about books. We talk about Oliver's books, about our books, about who's reading what, about what our friends are reading, or what we've recommended. And we share books and we talk about popular literature. You know, I subscribe to a couple of literary magazines that I enjoy reading and I still enjoy reading with my brother, today. We share stories and we share a lot that developed from that childhood connection of books because that was really about the only thing we had in common.

Kate Schafstall: [00:18:08] So, I think it's — I have a probably unique perspective in this, but you say we don't read as a family and I've actually seen that. So, to set the scene for the listeners, I pick up Oliver from my mom's house after school, and Andrea's house has this beautiful big window with a sidewalk in front. And as I'm walking up the sidewalk, I get to look in at what they're doing that day. And Andrea has her spot. Sharon has her spot. And then, Oliver is at the coffee table messing with the build of the day: a Lego, a dino, a magnet tile, whatever it is. But I'd say at least once a week, sometimes more, Andrea's reading to you guys. It could be one of those encyclopedias. It was a quilt of Oklahoma book recently, or one of Oliver's little ZooLetters. I do think you guys read together, because I get to see it. I see it from outside, and then I open the door. And more often than not, you or Oliver go, "Guess what we learned, today?" And that's been really beautiful, I think, in kind of thinking about family reading and the generations, that really stands out to me as something that is really special and I'm really thankful for in this season. I think I'm in a very lucky spot to get to see more when I step in the room — three, when I'm not there — generations of our family continue to spend quality time together with books and other forms of literature present. Mom, what are you thankful for?

Andrea Deaton: [00:19:55] The same thing. Grateful for the ties that hold our family together and that we're all so lucky to be together. And that reading is just that piece that's built into us. It's just baked into my life. But not everyone my age, or any of our ages really, is fortunate enough to have this opportunity that we have — not only to read books together, but to talk about books and share books, and have a mother and daughter as close friends and book buddies. I mean, to me that's just that's just wonderful. And what about you, Mom?

Sharon Moody: [00:20:38] I am at a time in my life where looking back is so enjoyable, looking back and really remembering so many good things. And surprisingly, how many of them are tied up in books — not just books, in reading. From the time I can remember, there was always reading material. That has stayed true through the generations. And to Oliver, who has a tremendous library, I'm very grateful that we are together. I'm grateful, I might say, to Reach Out and Read as they work to help other children have this same opportunity.

Kate Schafstall: [00:21:36] That's something that I wanted to acknowledge, too. I think I'm thankful to Reach Out and Read this season because without being asked to do this podcast, I don't think I would have intentionally asked you guys where the love of reading comes from — how it's been cultivated and, I don't know, just grown within our family and still present today. It's been a very beautiful thing to get to like, look into and talk about. I love you guys.

Sharon Moody: [00:22:09] Love you.

Andrea Deaton: [00:22:10] We love you. Thanks, Reach Out and Read.

Kate Schafstall: [00:22:12] Thank you.

Sharon Moody: [00:22:13] Thank you.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:22:18] Welcome to today's 33rd page or something extra for you, our listeners. In today's episode, we heard from multiple generations of a family about what reading and sharing books meant to them. We heard about their reminiscences, their thoughts, their ideas, and the place it really occupied in their lives. There was, however, one generation that was referenced, but that we didn't hear from. So, we thought we'd give him an opportunity to say why he cared about reading and what it brought to his life. Let's listen.

Oliver Schafstall: [00:22:57] Hi, I'm Oliver. I'm six years old. I really like reading books, because I really like reading new words. It feels really exciting to me.

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria: [00:23:14] New words. What a lovely thing to be grateful for. And that's today's 33rd page. You've been listening to the Reach Out and Read Podcast. Reach Out and Read is a nonprofit organization that is the authoritative national voice for the positive effects of reading daily and supports, coaches, and celebrates engaging in those language-rich activities with young children. We're continually inspired by stories that encourage language literacy and Early Relational Health. Visit us at

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