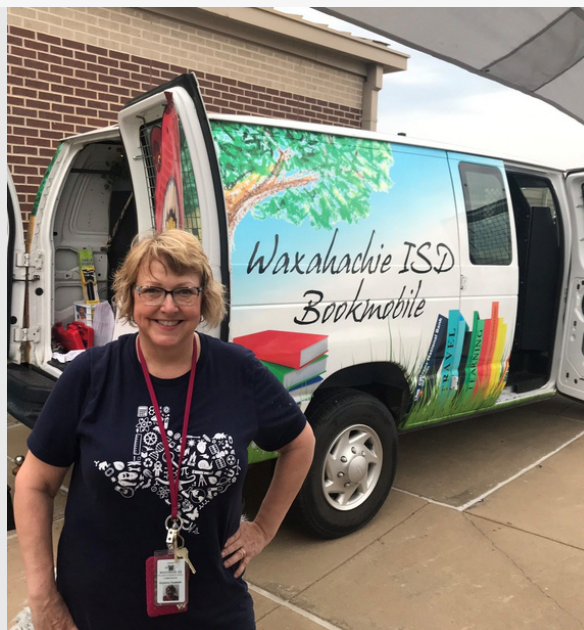


---

# GLENNA REISNER

## FIRST BOOK DONOR SPOTLIGHT

**I'm reminded of how each of us can make a difference in the lives of those around us by partnering with others around common goals.**



### HOW DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT FIRST BOOK?

During my first semester as a librarian in my current school district, I received a plethora of amazing books for free through a First Book grant that the previous librarian had been awarded. I thought, "What is this greatness? How can I get more books for students at my two Title I schools?" Over the past 11 years, we have received funding from various corporations such as the Ford Foundation, Pizza Hut, and Whataburger.

### WHAT ABOUT FIRST BOOK'S MISSION SPEAKS TO YOU?

Equal access to quality education is a fundamental right. First Book has used that shared mission to grow powerful partnerships. I've seen firsthand how the power of book ownership has impacted families in our community. First Book has enabled our district bookmobile and local Little Free Libraries to stay stocked with quality books to share with kids in need. I'm reminded of how each of us can make a difference in the lives of those around us by partnering with others around common goals.

---

## TO YOU, WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF A GOOD BOOK?

Making connections and opening the reader to new worlds, people, and places outside of their everyday life through the power of story.

## AS A SCHOOL LIBRARIAN, DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE BOOK THAT YOU READ WITH YOUR STUDENTS?

My most recent favorite read-aloud is Malcolm Mitchell's My Very Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World. He used his own experiences to share a story that connects to numerous readers. Our students love this book because many of them can see themselves in the struggles of a reluctant reader. I share with my kids how the author's use of simile and descriptive language, makes reading his book a sensory experience that we can see, hear, feel, and even smell, drawing on our own memories via our senses.

This fall, I plan to read aloud LeUyen Pham's beautiful new picture book, Inside, Outside, as we begin a new year and reflect on our recent experiences when the world changed during the pandemic. Books connect us. Reading aloud provides a rich experience to explore and expand upon those connections.

## IF YOU COULD SPEND THE DAY WITH A POPULAR AUTHOR, WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

Perhaps Patricia McLachlan or Peter Reynolds. Reading a beautifully written story like Sarah, Plain and Tall or All the Places to Love transports me into the lives and hearts of the characters. I really love historical fiction and she does it so well.

In the same way, Peter Reynolds' book, The Word Collector emphasizes the power of words. I'm impressed and inspired by his ongoing work to write and/or illustrate books that help us discover our place in the world and our relationships with the world and each other. His books are both timely and timeless. I would love the chance to watch him create his amazing works through his drawings and stories.

## HOW DID READING IMPACT YOU AS A CHILD?

As the middle child of five, reading was my favorite escape. Books helped me experience worlds outside my own and gave me insight and empathy. My avid reading contributed to my success in school and inspired me to become a teacher and librarian. It set the stage for me to be a lifelong learner and lover of story.

---

## WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT SUPPORTING FIRST BOOK'S WORK?

I have been personally blessed to experience the generosity of First Book and its sponsors. Growing our school library and our students' home libraries with quality books is one of my greatest joys. In 2019, I partnered with other educators to write a grant when the OMG Book Awards became available in our state. We were given \$20,000 in First Book credits that we shared with organizations and educators throughout our community. Between that grant and ongoing donations from our community, we have given away 50,000+ free books. It's easy to support First Book because of the trustworthy relationships they've built with publishers and corporate sponsors, allowing educators like me to provide great quality resources at a tremendous value.

## WHY DO YOU LOVE FIRST BOOK'S BOOK CLUB?

The book club helps me feel connected to the larger mission of First Book. It's an ongoing reminder to be open to ways I can have an impact in my own community through literacy projects.

Each month a simple white box shows up in my mailbox. When I see that the return address is First Book, I can't wait to discover the treasure inside! The staff at First Book select powerful reads and resources to accompany the books. One highlight is the letter enclosed in the box, detailing each book and its author and why they were selected for the book club.

### THE IMPACT

"Access provides untold options and opportunities. Families often need the support of organizations such as First Book and schools to gain knowledge about the importance of early literacy and how they can support their children's development as learners."



---

## WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig. Thought-provoking, so far. What makes a life well lived? Love the use of the library and infinite books to represent the impact of our life choices on alternate realities.

## WHAT IS ONE THING ABOUT YOU THAT WOULD SURPRISE PEOPLE?

I was painfully shy when I was younger. Now I'm the type that never meets a stranger, and chats with anyone and everyone. I am enriched and love connections that are made through conversations. Although I grew up in one city throughout my childhood, my adult life has been spent in various states and countries including Illinois, Florida, Texas, Canada, and Ukraine with my husband and our three children. We have countless friends and amazing connections around the world. There is a richness to my life in celebrating and appreciating all those diverse relationships! I'm grateful I have learned to use my voice.

## WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR FELLOW EDUCATORS AT THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR?

A sticker, keychain, water bottle, or other common item printed with a QR code for our library website, providing easy access to the resources available through our district, state, and First Book. Educators are so stretched and it's my hope that the resources we share, through our library and online databases, help make their Herculean jobs a little easier, more efficient, and more productive.

**200 MILLION**

books and resources  
distributed to date.

**5 MILLION**

children reached  
annually.

---

## FIRST BOOK SERVES 500,000+ EDUCATORS WHO PURCHASE BOOKS AND RESOURCES OUT OF THEIR OWN POCKET DAILY FOR THEIR STUDENTS. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU PASS ALONG?

Educators are typically generous with their time, talent, and gifts. First Book provides free and low-cost resources that provide great value. Accessing the free resources on the First Book website and pairing them with books from your school or public library is an easy way to help students delve deeper into topics on diversity, inclusiveness, and social and emotional learning.

I would also want educators to be aware of the other types of resources that are available in addition to books; from school supplies to basic needs to games and activities for active learning, there is so much to discover on the Marketplace. I may warn them that getting a pallet (or pallets) of books from the Book Bank can be addicting and overwhelming, but filled with so much goodness and joy to be shared! All of our kindergarten and first-grade classrooms at my Title I campuses received a full set of Mo Willems' Elephant and Piggie books that were among the treasures in one of our pallets.

Keep on reading, keep on sharing books! We, as educators, make a difference and are planting seeds that will grow lifelong literacy. First Book is an incredible and impactful way to be a beneficial presence in this world.

## MORE DONOR UPDATES

Visit our Support Us page to learn more about how your support impacts educators and the families we serve. Download even more Donor Spotlights.

[FIRSTBOOK.ORG/DONORS](https://firstbook.org/donors)