

Life of an Avid Reader – Age 9



This Fall, Haywood County Schools held a contest called “Tweet All About It” for all students. In order to enter this contest, students had to write a book review about one of their favorite books, but it could be no longer than a normal tweet. This means they could only use 140 characters. Here is the winning tweet: *Have you ever lost a cat? Maybe it went to live with wild cats! Join Rusty on an adventure beyond any cat’s dreams, in the wild wood!”*

Mena Tanner, a 3rd grader at Hazelwood Elementary School, won this county-wide contest. Mena, an avid reader, wrote about the book called *Warriors: Into the Wild* by Erin Hunter. It is the first book in the Warriors series, and her all-time favorite book; she said she has read it over fifteen times. As the winner to this contest, Mena won a \$25 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble and has already used her gift card to purchase more books!

Mena says that reading is an important part of her daily life. On average she reads 2-3 books a week. Her favorite series is the “Warrior” series which she wrote about in her tweet, but if she had to pick another favorite series it would be the *Guardians of Ga’hoole* series by Kathryn Lasky. It is about an owl named Soren who must travel with his friends to a tree in the middle of the ocean on a little island. There are more good owls there, and they take Soren in and make him the head teacher for flying in bad weather. Her favorite book in this series is *The Siege*, the 4th book in this series. It is about an evil owl that has a baby, but the baby is born good and escapes.

Carol Clarke, the Librarian, at Hazelwood Elementary says that she sees Mena almost every day checking out new books. “She has even joined our Battle of the Books team as a 3rd grader even though you can’t officially compete until 4th and 5th grade. It is great having her as a part of our team since she loves reading, talking about books, and the nature of the Battle of the Books competition”, says Clarke.

Mena’s love of books started at home with her parents, Ben and Wendy Tanner. When asked how they have fostered a love of reading in their children (Mena and her sister, Sophie), they give several reasons. For us, “books are thought of as prized possessions, valued for their inspiration, education, and entertainment. We have read to our daughters since they were babies and continue to support their reading (and related writing!) endeavors as they grow. For us,

reading has always been a means of expanding the world around us. It's a wonderful way to discover different people and places and times, to investigate new information and ideas, and to engage the creative powers of your imagination. These days our family's preferred shopping-for-fun involves a used book store and we also think that one of the best hangouts is the nearest local library. Mena recently insisted on acquiring her own personal library card!"

In addition, the Tanners believe that their children became particularly hooked on reading when they started choosing books based on their own interests at the Hazelwood School library and began to read for their own pleasure. They also feel that their exposure to award-winning authors and story-lines through Hazelwood's "Battle of the Books" program was another significant factor in growing their love of reading. "We also credit many of the other great pro-reading programs that Hazelwood has had over the years with inspiring our kids to view reading as a positive influence in their lives and in the life and success of the larger community", says Wendy Tanner. Pictures and postings of students, teachers, and school administrators with their favorite books and current reading selections line the Hazelwood hallway walls, and events like the Scholastic Book Fair and Family Reading Night in the library are favorite occasions for our children. Mena and her sister have enjoyed the school's Birthday Book program, the "Principal's Pick of the Month" and other special read-aloud books presented in their classes, classroom holiday book exchanges, the terrific "Leader in Me" program based on the book by the same name, last Halloween's festive "Book-a-ween," and, of course, Summer Reading Log programs and contests like "Tweet All About It!" that encourage and reward them for their reading."

As parents, the Tanners state that they are "continually impressed with the care and effort that is put into our children's reading education in this county. Our children are lucky to have educators whom they can look up to as strong role models, educators who not only encourage, but visibly practice academic achievement and excellence, and who are themselves active and enthusiastic readers."

Congratulations again to Mena, a life-long, avid reader at 9!