Reading Under All Circumstances

What if you could make a difference?

A library in every neighborhood
“A library is any place where books are shared and read aloud to children”

Rana Dajani, founder and director
You inspire me…

By Rana Dajani, founder and director of “We Love Reading”

Everyone is special. Everyone has something wonderful inside them waiting to be discovered. We Love Reading has served as a catalyst to help women discover their inner potential to go above and beyond their surroundings to become heroes of their own stories, their own lives and communities. Within these pages we share their stories. Stories that have inspired and created change.

Real change starts small and within each one of us. However, the consequences are huge and reach far beyond our awareness and wildest dreams. These stories set forth a call…a call to arms for every reader to search for her cause to make her life special and worthwhile to create change wherever you are…
I am Nabila Najjem, a housewife, a mother of six boys and a girl, and a grandmother of five. Unfortunately, my circumstances did not allow me to complete my education because I got married early.

I love making handicrafts and I excel at doing them, thanks be to Allah. I joined the Queen Rania Al Abdullah Gardens as they offered educational courses as well as handicrafts making sessions for women of the local community. This is where I got to know the We Love Reading initiative after which I attended courses held at its headquarters. I was impressed and I wanted to start a practice to apply what I learned in their courses. Those who enrolled in the courses, myself included received packs of books, mostly entertaining and educational stories for children of different ages.

I began contacting kids in my neighborhood in order to read stories to them, and here’s where the problem popped up; the children gathered but we could not find a place to read. Then, the idea of reading inside our neighborhood’s mosque crossed my mind, so I went to the Imam and suggested the idea, but he refused due to lack of approval from the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Instead, my husband, who has supported me with my project in every step, proposed that I read to the children inside our house. Then, I started meeting with the children every Saturday and I also distributed the stories. I read regularly. My entire family helped me, for example, my daughter Eman and my daughters in law would read to the children at times when I was busy.

I felt that the children really enjoyed the stories and they seemed very interested in the topics and pictures inside the stories; even their parents realized how our reading sessions influenced their children’s personalities and their daily lives. In fact, our neighborhood became one of the cleanest neighborhoods in the region; as the children started recycling some of their houses' wastes. They also started saving water and electricity in their own homes and they took tremendous care of their homes' gardens. As a result, I became so proud of these accomplishments. What made me even prouder was the fact that a lot of the mothers told me that their children saved some of their pocket money to buy new books, and many of them improved their academic performance because they dedicated time to reading regularly and learning new vocabulary.
I am so proud of my participation in this initiative and I couldn't be more fortunate to have had met the “We Love Reading” team. I would also like to thank Dr. Rana Al-Dajani for this amazing project and I hope that this project will spread even further and help all the countries of the world.

Bader is a five-year-old child and is one of the children who comes to hear the stories that I read; he's also Nabila’s grandchild. He was always eager to go every Saturday to listen to his grandmother, me, read a new and useful story. Sometimes, he even insists that his mother repeats the story to him before going to bed.

“We Love Reading” has transformed me from an uneducated person to an educated person”

Nabila Najjem , a volunteer at We Love Reading
My experience with “We Love Reading”

Written by: Dina Yaghnam, a volunteer at “We Love Reading”

Who is Dina Yaghnam?

As a wife and a mother of 3 children, I like to call myself a 'professional volunteer.' I have been fortunate to receive many opportunities over the course of my life, including but not limited to vocational work in NGOs, particularly in the domain of Public Relations and media. My experience there has fueled me with a lot of knowledge and experience that I found it my duty to utilize this profession for the benefit of my society.

How did you start with 'We Love Reading'?

Since I was pregnant with my first daughter a little more than a decade ago I started reading “What to expect when you’re expecting a child”, and I was convinced by the pivotal role of reading to children, not only after birth, but also while they’re inside the wombs of their mothers. So I started reading to “Kira” and after I gave birth, reading became an essential part of my daily routine before sleeping. I felt how my daughter was captivated by my reading. Yet, I still wanted to learn more techniques about how to read effectively to her. Since at that point, I had already produced a TV show about creating films in Jordan, it struck me that I should start a TV show about reading stories to children in the Arabic language, as there had been none in Arabic before. Coincidentally, I read about a new initiative that aims to spread the love of reading amongst children, and as a result, I was excited, feeling that it was God who managed it all. So I contacted Dr. Rana Dajani, and fortunately, there was a workshop in which I participated, which was held in 2006 as far as I recall.
How did your journey begin and what were your predictions?

From the beginning, my idea of a library was hypothetical in the sense that I would disseminate it through the media (TV, Internet, CDs) in order to reach a larger audience of children and their parents. I started to prepare a TV program, but the plan was postponed because of my third pregnancy. I also felt sad along with somewhat resentful because I wasn’t able to finish the project. Then I was called by the Change (Taghyeer) Organization which 'We Love Reading' belongs to, one more time. This time, they asked about my willingness to participate in a workshop centered on the effect of stories that urge readers to help rescue the environment. So I took the opportunity to read to a group of children in Sunday schools in the National Orthodox School. I didn’t know what to expect, but the children’s connection and their amazement in the presence of a person who reads to them filled me with happiness and I avouch the importance of this issue.

Display the problems and challenges that you faced and how you went through solving those predicaments.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that I faced was dedicating time, not only for myself to do this work, but also convincing all the different people that I have worked with to allow me to read to children. Moreover, the Sunday schools weren’t the only side that I contacted; I was expecting the other places to welcome the idea of volunteering for reading to children, but I was surprised by their reactions, for they considered reading for pleasure (which promotes the love of reading) merely a form of entertainment and heresy which they did not have time for. In some cases the challenge was the energy of the children. In that case, I would abridge the story, as well as the session but I read to them an extra story in the next session if they seemed interested.

Where will Dina’s library be 5 years in the future?

Dina’s library, after 5 years, will provide answers for the world via the internet.

Describe We Love Reading in one sentence.

It is a pioneer movement that opens small and big minds using the light of reading.
The Road to giving

Written by: Rana Sadaqa, a volunteer at “We Love Reading”

على قدر أهل العزم تأتي العزائم ... وتأتي على قدر أهل الكرام المكارم
وعظم في عين الصغير صغارها ...... وتصغر في عين العظيم العظائم

The words of Abi Al-Taieb Al-Moutanabi brought many questions to my mind: how can I be a positive human in society to change myself and to change others? How can I change? Where do I start? Many questions resonated inside me, how many times did I try and decide to return. I gave myself a day or a season to start from, but that day always passed before I did anything.

In November 2013, I was invited to attend a workshop about the art of reading aloud to children, which was an initiative that the ‘We Love Reading’ project had been working on in the city of Aqaba. I attended this workshop out of curiosity, and this curiosity was transformed to a question that shone in my mind. Can reading stories aloud to children transform a child’s negative behavior into something that would promote the ‘revolution of reading’?

After a week of participating in this initiative I started to think about another serious step for a project that promotes the love of reading. We started looking for a place in which we could launch this project and the first place to be selected was a place of prayer for females in the mosque of “Jaafar bin Abi-Talib” in the district of Al-Ramil. The project at the beginning, included 20 children and later on, the number went up as high as 50 children that ranged from 5 year olds to 15 year olds. Reading was once a week for these children.
I didn’t realize that there was a deep passion for children to read stories, and that children were also overjoyed when borrowing the stories that they liked. Some children liked it so much, they started impersonating me when reading stories at home and at school. The aspect that really changed after reading these stories was the children’s behavior; for some of the children, their reading skills developed significantly and many others were able to understand the moral of the story.

In the beginning, the initiative faced many common problems. The venue in the beginning was crammed with the women of the mosque, which made a lot of noise. Success didn’t need people but needed will, and for it to succeed it is necessary for your will to overtake your fear of failure. From there came the idea about building a private library for children next to a mosque, then I received a helping hand from my husband, my parents and my children to build a project called “We Love Reading” which was consistently supported by friends and by the attendance of the children. The library officially opened on the 14th of July, 2014.

The project has benefitted not only the children but it has also changed me. Through leading this project many parts of my character were enlightened, including parts that had been abandoned deserted throughout the years. Those abandoned parts were renewed with idea of responsibility, patience, thinking and planning for every step that I take. The best thing that you could find out is that you have a goal in your life. The goal of the future is established to rescue the neglected part of society, the broken communities in our country. I hope that we could make a special kind of story with special content, by which we could encompass all parts of our society. Therefore ‘We Love Reading’ was the spark that helped us take our first step on our journey of knowledge so that we could launch our projects for endless destinations.

“The best thing that you could find out is that you have a goal in your life.”

Rana Sadaqa, a volunteer at “We Love Reading”
By the name of Allah…

Written by: Hana’a Mahmoud Jaradat, a volunteer at We Love Reading

I am Hana’a Mahmoud Jaradat. I was born and raised in Kuwait where I also studied Shariah law. However, upon the dreadful events of the notorious Desert Storm in Kuwait, we returned to Irbid to live there. My first job in Irbid was teaching, and although I believe that teaching is a noble career, I aspired for more than that. But I wished to become a volunteer as a member of an organization which would gather the women of Jordan. After attending many conferences, I met Dr. Rana Dajani in 2009 at a conference on women leaders. There, Dr. Rana introduced her initiative and since then I trained with her on how to read aloud to children. Immediately after, I started implementing the initiative, however, I faced many obstacles that prevented me from implementing what I had learned. For instance, the board of education in Irbid would not allow me to enter their schools and administer the We Love Reading program for personal reasons. Nevertheless, I insisted that I would fulfill my ambition, and as a result of my determination, I overcame the challenge and held the program at private educational centers for young children, centers for Qur’an memorization, mosques during summer vacations, at hospitals in the children’s sections and at home. Thanks be to Allah, the results were amazing and satisfying. When I met the kids later on, they told me things like we replaced our old lightbulbs with the spiraling lightbulbs to save energy. And when they see a faucet dripping, they shut it off. And I am always fighting with my sister’s kids because they want my copies of the stories. I want to open a library to serve the region of Al-Mazar Al-Shimali, distributing scientific, fictional and electronic books to children and students. When I see children read, I see happiness in their eyes. And I congratulate and appreciate the efforts of Dr. Rana and all who worked to make this program possible. And may Allah bless them and bring them success.
The “We Love Reading Community “ is a magazine that the Taghyeer Organization has produced in order to form long-lasting connections between the entrepreneur of the Jordanian society and the volunteer-storytellers who work to spread the love of reading in every neighborhood of our beloved country. By providing the right environment for them to open up and share their incredible stories of success as well as the challenges that they overcame to help the biggest group of people benefit from their personal experiences.

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