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[Home](#)
[News](#)
[Charger Pride](#)
[Service & Leadership](#)
[Fine Arts](#)
[Sports](#)
[Alumni & Reunions](#)
[Archives](#)

To Learn, to Read, to Serve

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By Luke Williams '18

Let's play a game. To begin, picture a world filled with people. Envision them walking around going about their daily activities, just as you and I do. Now imagine that these people have no concept of the written word. They cannot write a simple sentence, let alone record knowledge to be passed down. Nor can they read a letter or an intriguing novel.

The written word provides us with the ability to reflect, remember, speculate, and create, it is nothing short of a superpower. Simple markings on a piece of paper allow us to channel our feelings and come to understand them, find solace and joy, and connect with the world around us. It doesn't take much of an imagination to realize that without the written word we lose a piece of our humanity.

I discovered the true power of the written word while volunteering with the Oklahoma Metropolitan Library System's "Come Read With Me" (CRWM) program over the summer. About 10 libraries across Oklahoma participate in this program, which allows children to experience the magic of reading. Library employees, with the assistance of student and adult volunteers, work ardently in the pursuit of reading and sharing stories with young children who are eager to listen and learn.

The local CRWM program was hosted at the Downtown YMCA. With eight other volunteers by my side, I selected the day's stories to read. At 9:30 am, the children would rush into the room, ready to dive into a new story.

One day, the children I had read to the week before came into the room with huge smiles on their faces. They were headed straight for me. I knew right away that something truly special was happening ... in just one week this had become my group. From then on, I read to the same children, allowing us to get to know each other. I truly began to care for them and it became increasingly important for me to instill in them one of the most basic beliefs that I will always hold true: there are wonders to be worked with the written word.

During our sessions, we rode tigers through the Amazon, became pirates on the most daring of adventures, and learned how much food a caterpillar can eat. With every story I came to realize that these children were not only living out fantasies through books, they were learning what it means to dream, to wonder, to imagine.

After helping at CRWM, I assisted the program's director, Angela Walton, with some of the daily tasks that keep the program running smoothly. Working with Mrs. Walton each week made me realize how much thought and care go into making this program as effective and special as it is. Working by her side was one of the most important experiences I have ever had. She showed me that, with dedication and a true belief in one's work, anything can be accomplished. She helped me grow as a person, a leader, and a servant.

While my time with Mrs. Walton was invaluable, it is the children that I still picture vividly in my mind – seeing their smiles and hearing their laughs as they sat down at my spot and pointed to the book they wanted that day; watching them lose themselves as they became astronauts exploring a black hole; watching as they became more inquisitive, thoughtful, and caring. Being a part of CRWM was an incomparable experience that I will not soon forget.

Could leading ever feel more like serving? I don't think so. In the end, I took away three main things from volunteering with CRWM: Faith and belief in your work are keys to success in all things; sometimes the greatest service is accomplished through leadership; and there is still magic to be found in the world. All it takes is a young soul and an old story for us all to soar together.

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Coaching
Monday - January 4, 2016
7:00 PM

Howard Theatre

Lower School Parent Preview Days

Tuesday - January 12, 2016
9:00 AM to 10:00 AM

Lower School Parent Preview Days

Wednesday - January 13, 2016
9:00 AM to 10:00 AM

**J.W. Patterson Invitational Debate
Tournament**

Saturday - January 16, 2016
Upper School

**J.W. Patterson Invitational Debate
Tournament**

Sunday - January 17, 2016
Upper School