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Meet 10-Year Old Librarian, Bailey Williams

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Meet O’Neal Elementary’s 10-year-old librarian

Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The self-imposed questionnaire above is precisely how 10-year-old Bailey filled out her successful “application for co-librarian” to land a job in the O’Neal library one year ago.

Bailey, now a Middle School fifth grader, can be found after school at her former elementary labeling and putting books on shelves, polishing tables, crafting holiday decorations, tending to the pet hamster and hedgehog, and running miscellaneous errands in the building as assigned by O’Neal Librarian Ashley Robertson.

“She just came to me one day and told me that she was gonna be co-librarian,” said Bailey’s mother Julie Williams, an insurance billing clerk. “I don’t know how she broached Ashley, but she filled out a job application, and evidently Ashley hired her.”

The seed was planted last school year when O’Neal upperclassmen were tasked with reading to younger students. After creating and submitting the application, Bailey began sacrificing her recess to help out as needed. Today she has her own desk at the library, complete with a nameplate and family portraits of her brothers and dog. She also volunteers during select academic labs at the Middle School.

“I like helping little kids find their books,” said Bailey, wearing a homemade lanyard that

states her job title. “It’s mostly picture books in the first grade, then by second they start to learn how to spell words and write sentences. By third grade they are reading books like ‘Diary of a Wimpy Kid,’ then in fourth they go back to comic books, because they are worn out from AR testing.” Accelerated Reader, used at some elementaries in the district, is a quizzing program designed to monitor the completion of reading assignments.

The girl’s budding passion for books has carried over to her home life. Bailey has a bookshelf in her bedroom and a system for her family to check out the books she has collected at fairs. Her father Jim, an occupational therapist, has a book that is twelve months overdue, according to Bailey, who enforces her own fines. “Let’s just say I’ve gotten a lot of shoes,” she said.

“She’s always done these sort of things – like having school with stuffed animals,” Julie said. “When she sets her mind to do something, she does it. And I mean she does it,” he mom continued, sharing that Bailey is also a Junior Girl Scout and sold 56 boxes of cookies on the very first day of the annual sale.

Earlier this school year, Bailey was informing elementary students how they are to behave in the hallway when O’Neal Principal Dr. Amy Dill first got to meet the young co-librarian. “She’s productive, responsible and a good role model,” Dill exclaimed. “She’s going to be a little teacher.”

Bailey’s application spawned other ideas from classmates for student positions at O’Neal, according to Robertson, including computer lab, counseling, physical education, nursing and breakfast assistants.

Robertson was even invited to Bailey’s birthday party over the summer, and is considered a friend of the family. “It reminds me that sometimes being a teacher is about making a connection with students, not just a curriculum,” Robertson said. “This experience could change the rest of her life.”

Name: Bailey Williams

Number: Don’t have one yet

Address: Mrs. Owings’ classroom

Talents: Able to organize perfectly

Achievements: Reading 66 chapters in one book

Shown in the photos: Bailey poses next to her computer desk, which contains a basket with items such as stickers to identify books that are about popular subjects like animals.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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