

National Magazine Tells the Stories of Episcopal Student's Experiences in August 2016 Flood

BY WENDY LOUP | SPECIAL TO THE ADVOCATE | SEP 6, 2017 - 3:00 PM



***Storyworks* editor Lauren Tarshis and Episcopal School fifth-grade teacher Margaret Boudreaux meet in November to discuss the 2016 August flooding and Tarshis's article in *Storyworks* about the flood.**

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Fifth-grade students at Episcopal School of Baton Rouge found a way to tell their experiences of the August 2016 flood. The article, "Our World Turned To Water" is featured in the September issue of *Storyworks* educational magazine from Scholastic. Margaret Boudreaux, fifth-grade language arts teacher at Episcopal, said one-third of Episcopal's students experienced flooding in their homes.

"Our subscription to *Storyworks* had arrived and we thought, 'We have a story. We survived this. We

should send the writer an email,'" Boudreaux said. Boudreaux was familiar with *Storyworks* editor and writer Lauren Tarshis, who wrote a series of books called "I Survived" documenting natural disasters with fictional characters.

Boudreaux's class composed an email, then pressed send. The next morning, Tarshis had responded. When Tarshis read the email from Boudreaux's class, she said, she was excited. "It was such an impulsive move for me," Tarshis said. "I just thought 'What can

I do to help? I had been reading and seeing news reports about the flood. *Storyworks'* teachers are an extended part of our family. "The idea that people weren't talking about the disaster in Louisiana concerned me," Tarshis said. "Once I went down there, I hoped I could honor the fact that I would be able to respect them and capture what they went through."

Tarshis traveled to Baton Rouge in November with her son, filmmaker Jeremy Dreyfuss. Boudreaux was stunned to hear Tarshis wanted to visit her class. "I told the children, 'She wants to come! She's bringing her son who is a filmmaker!'" Boudreaux said. "The thing we loved about the project was how resilient Lauren was about it. "She had done her job by us. I was so excited because I knew Lauren was a vehicle to show what we had been through."

Although adults will read the article, the target audience is for younger readers. "This is not for an audience of grown-ups," Boudreaux said. "It's worded for children. We've shown how important it is to help the community."

Tarshis has been a writer with Scholastic for 28 years. Although the subject matter has been difficult at times, she's focused on telling the story for a child to explore outside of where they live. "Even if you aren't a reader, as a kid, you need to have access to these stories," Tarshis said. "Every sentence is crafted. I'm telling about these events to the readers and trying to get them to connect. Even if it's about a child that doesn't look like you, it still has an emotional component. "Every one of the stories in



Lauren Tarshis meets with Episcopal staff and students in November to learn about their experiences in the 2016 flood.

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Baton Rouge was overwhelming. The challenge was to show how the community came together. That was the story Margaret wanted to tell."

Tarshis said she wanted to teach a lesson through her writing. "We are all going to go through our troubles, but to read about generosity and showing up when needed is good for the kids," Tarshis said.

Boudreaux said it was an amazing, yet emotional project for her students. "We were overjoyed that we could reach out to someone famous," Boudreaux said. "However, it did bring back bittersweet memories for all of us."

Storyworks is read by more than 1 million students nationwide, according to Tarshis. The issues are published six times during the school year. For more information about *Storyworks*, visit **storyworks.scholastic.com**.