



Fifth-grader Ryan Ried of St. Charles starts reading his new “I Survived” books by children’s author Lauren Tarshis while he waits in line for her to sign them Wednesday at Ferson Creek Elementary School in St. Charls. He said he planned to continue reading them that night.

LAURA SOECKER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lauren Tarshis visits Ferson Creek Elementary

Children’s author Lauren Tarshis visited third-, fourth- and fifth-graders Wednesday at Ferson Creek Elementary in St. Charles.

Tarshis, editorial director of language arts for Scholastic, a children’s publishing company, is the author of the historical fiction book series, ‘I Survived,’ which tells the story of a boy character living through a real event and how he survived it. The 11-part series covers events such as the Titanic sinking, the Great Chicago Fire, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina.

The 12th book in the series is the about the tornado disaster of 2011 that ripped though Joplin, Missouri. Kids and teachers contacted her with their recounts of the tornado and suggested she do a book on their story. Tarshis, who lives in Westport, Connecticut, visited Joplin and several schools last year and students and families shared with her their memories from the disaster.

“What’s been most amazing for me is the connection I feel with so many kids from around the country and teachers. It’s unbelievably gratifying,” Tarshis said of being an author.

Tarshis, whose father, Barry Tarshis, is a nonfiction author, was first published at 40. She shared with the student audience that she didn’t finish reading a book until she was 14 because of reading comprehension skills. (Her first book was “A Tale of Two Cities,” by Charles Dickens.) She could read single words just fine but when there were so many on a page, it was hard for her to process it so she never could finish a book.

She says what interests her about covering such topics in the ‘I Survived’ series isn’t about the destruction, but

about the people and how they survived and carried on in their lives.

After talking to the students and a question-and-answer session, Tarshis signed books for dozens of kids. Ryan Reid, 10, of St. Charles, started reading one of his three new books while he waited in line. He said he’s only read parts of the series but now plans to read them in full.

“I think everything is just great about (the books) ... how these people survived and what they have to go through to survive this is just all amazing,” Ryan said.

For more information on Tarshis, visit laurentarshis.com.