

Armed to help literacy

By **AMY SCHWABE**

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It all started with a broken arm.

Shorewood High School sophomore Katie Eder created Kids Tales last year, a non-profit organization that gives grade school kids the chance to write and publish their own short stories.

But Eder, who has published her own stories, received writing awards, and is working on her first novel, hadn't even been interested in writing until four years ago when she broke her arm during winter break.

"I took a lot of dancing so there was a lot of physical activity that I couldn't do with a broken arm," Eder said. "So my mom signed me up for writing classes because I couldn't do anything else. So there was a silver lining to that broken arm."

Upon discovering her own love of writing, Eder decided she wanted to share that passion with other kids.

"I probably came up with the idea in November of 2013," she said. "Basically what Kids Tales is is that we go into a school for a week and teach for about three hours a day. We start by brainstorming story ideas, and then in the middle of the week, we write and talk about story development and play some games to develop skills. Then by the end of

the week, we do revising, editing, and peer editing."

At the end of a Kids Tales session, each child has written his or her own story. The stories are then put into an anthology. Eder uses Amazon's CreateSpace service to self-publish the anthologies. "Every kid gets their own free book, and they're published authors."

Eder created Kids Tales as a non-profit organization that is funded by donations so that children are able to participate in the workshop free of charge. In the summer of 2014, the class was taught at two Milwaukee schools, Highland Community School and COA Youth and Family Centers.

"We started with schools my family and I had a connection with," Eder said. "We knew about them so we approached them with the idea, and everyone was really happy to accept it."

The program has grown in popularity in a very short time period, and this past summer, Kids Tales had encore performances in Highland and COA and debuted in another Milwaukee school, Doerfler. Kids Tales workshops were also taught in schools in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

Eder has also gotten awards for her accomplishments. After submitting a video description of Kids Tales and the benefits the program can provide to children

throughout the world, Eder won the AFS Vision in Action Award. Eder received a scholarship to travel to Colombia over the summer to teach her workshop to students there.

"It was all in Spanish, so that was a challenge because I don't speak Spanish," Eder said. "But 11 other American students who traveled with me spoke Spanish."

Aside from the language barrier, Eder felt the experience was very similar to local workshops she has taught.

"It was a very successful class," she said. "I thought the kids got the same thing out of it as the American kids. The kids are always very excited about writing."

Eder's most recent success as a result of Kids Tales is recognition by the International Literacy Association (ILA). Eder was included as the youngest on the organization's 30 under 30 list of "up-and-coming trailblazers (who) are changing the landscape of literacy and education."

Eder said, "I really didn't think I was going to win, but they

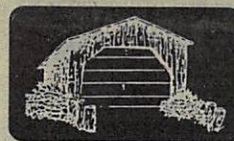


Submitted photo

Shorewood sophomore Katie Eder's Kids Tales program was recently recognized by the International Literacy Association.

did choose Kids Tales to be on the list. The people on the list are doing amazing things to spread literacy, so it's an honor to be on

that list." For more information about Kids Tales, visit www.kidstales.org.



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