

The Dream Dog Foundation

Lorraine Friedman, award-winning children's author, grew up in Dallas, Texas before she made her way to Alexandria. In 2002, she created the Dream Dog Foundation. The Foundation's goal is to: "empower children to believe in themselves through experiential learning, literacy, and empowerment programs that instill a love of learning."

This Foundation has opened up a multitude of opportunities not only for Friedman, but for the children in the communities, because there has been an overwhelming amount of support coming from all directions. All profits from this Foundation are funneled back into a variety of the Alexandria City programs. This organization sparked the creation of the following interactive days: Kids Make a Difference, Kids Empowering Kids, and Conexiones (Family Links). Each day was dedicated to connecting community/family members together and allowing kids to express themselves in creative ways. As more and more students got involved with these programs, another program called and Books of My Own (BOMO) was created. BOMO allows students to create and compose creative stories and poetry pieces on topics such as life lessons, thankfulness, family, and friends.

Friedman works closely with the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA), specifically the children at the Ruby Tucker Center. She has seen firsthand the impact that her programs have on these flourishing, young children. Friedman has seen grades as low as D's go up to at least B's through her BOMO program. Friedman teaches poetry because it allows for a judgment-free space since there are no rules or formats that have to be followed. This works especially well for her students because they are able to freely express themselves without fear of "doing it wrong." Poetry taps into their creative sides, allowing their emotions and imaginations to guide their creative minds. Friedman also partners with ARHA to do the annual Santa's Winter Wonderland. During this exciting time, the children get to pick out books as their gift right before they see Santa Claus.

Ms. Friedman's main motivation is the children; she sees them as her "little family." Working with the ARHA youth brings her an abundance of joy because "giving is her soul." So when ACPS cut off funding, it was no surprise that she continued her programs. She believed that "the need is still there, even if the funding isn't."

The students she works with at the Ruby Tucker Center write poems about a variety of topics like: life lessons, being thankful, family, and friends. Below is an excerpt about life lessons from one of her students:



**My life lessons to you are to work hard,
Never give up, live your dreams,
Never let anyone tell you that you're not great at
anything, listen to what your heart tells you,
and know right from wrong.**