

# *Anyone can teach someone to read*

By Marsha Henry Goff

Back in 1950 in two-thirds of the states the illiteracy rate was 3% or less. In the other third of states, it was 10% or less. Today, the illiteracy rate in the U.S. is 21% and 56% of those who can read are reading at the sixth grade level or below. We're regressing, not progressing. Although I cannot find data to support it, logic says that those who cannot read or are reading below sixth grade level are more likely the young, not the old.

If your grandchildren are not reading at grade level, you can help them. Anyone can teach reading. Our first grandchild is special needs and lives in a group home. One day a substitute caretaker called me and asked excitedly, "Do you know he can read? I never worked with a client who could read!"

"Sure," I said, "my mother

taught him."

Special Ed teachers did not attempt to teach B.J. to read so my mother, who looked after him while his father worked, just could not stand the idea of not trying to teach him to read. She made flash cards, used phonics to teach him to sound out words and showed him lip and tongue positions to pronounce words. Once he could read, she taught him to write the alphabet, then to write and spell words. The first two words she taught him to spell were Corvette (his dad had one) and Mississippi. B.J. may never read a college textbook but he certainly enjoys reading about dinosaurs and the weather.

When my mother-in-law's mother died, with whom Jeanetta, her younger sister with Down syndrome lived, my mother- and father-in-law, then empty nesters, built two rooms onto their farmhouse and

invited her to live with them. In the 1920s and 1930s, when Jeanetta was school aged, children with Down syndrome were not allowed to go to school so she had no opportunity to learn. My mother-in-law changed that and taught her to read at the age of 36, as well as to write her name. Jeanetta was capable of learning; she just hadn't had the chance. Fortunately, today children with Down syndrome can go to school and learn as much as their ability allows them.

The amazing thing about my late mother-in-law is that she — as one of the older children in a large family — was forced to quit school in third grade and go to work to help her family. But she was intelligent and an avid reader and self-educated herself.

She often surprised me about how many things she knew about a wide variety of subjects. In her 90s, she kept me busy checking out large-print books from the library. She never lost her love of reading.

Wisevoter says the illiteracy rate in Kansas is 19.3 meaning about one of five people are illiterate. A KU professor recently wrote about some college freshmen not being able to do the work expected of them, so if your young grandchildren are having trouble with reading, you can help them. The joy they will feel when something hard to do becomes easy is wonderful to behold. As an added benefit, it will give you the chance to spend additional time with them and make your relationship even closer.

## *Susan Harris message*

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for review and recommendation to approve and then presented to the JAAA Board of Directors for approval and incorporation into the annual area plan. The table on page two shows the services that are funded by JAAA through the Older Americans Act, as one can see this is a wide range of services targeted to those age 60 and older.

While it may seem early, plan ahead for Medicare Open Enrollment. October 15th starts Medicare Open Enrollment, which runs through December 7th. This is the time that Medicare Beneficiaries are given the opportunity to shop and compare Medicare Part D plans as well as Medicare

## **Two Unlikely Reading Teachers**



Christina Goff taught her sister to read.



June Henry taught her great-grandson to read.

Advantage Plans. We encourage all Medicare Beneficiaries to take the opportunity to review their current Medicare Part D plan or Medicare Advantage Plan to see if that plan is going to continue to be the appropriate plan for you with regard to cost and coverage. Plans can change annually what they charge in premium, as well as costs you will pay at the pharmacy counter ... it is in your best interest to review your plan and compare coverage options and make changes if necessary. We have a team of individuals ready and able to help you through this process. We will be opening up appointment times in mid-September. Be sure to call to get your appointment with one of our SHICK counselors.