



THE LAST WORD

Let's Get This Potty Started!

Jenna Nemec-Loise

Here's how you know you've really made an impression on a toddler: He shows you his brand-new Spider-Man underpants...while he's still wearing them.

Everett was a few months shy of three on the day he visited the library to announce his newly minted status as a potty-trained kid. He just couldn't wait. Barely making it through the Children's Room door, Everett took one look at me and declared with all the pride his little self could muster, "Miss Jenna, I'm a big boy!"

Then he promptly dropped his drawers to prove it.

There I am at my desk, having a routine chat with one of our security officers, when suddenly a toddler is beaming at me from across the room, pants around his ankles.

We couldn't help but chuckle and avert our eyes. (I mean, really, where are you supposed to look in a situation like this?) A few seconds later, Everett's nanny walked in, sized up the situation, and joined our chorus of awkward giggles as she pulled up his jeans.

This was definitely not what Everett had planned. This was his Big Moment, and the grown-ups were ruining it for him. He put his hands on his hips, twisted his freckled features into a grimace, and shouted, "WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT?"

Touché, Everett. Touché.

I love telling this story, but not for the reasons you might think.

Sure, it's funny and sweet in that uncomfortable sort of way. The real nugget, though? Everett wanted to share the biggest achievement of his young life with a special someone who helped him get there—Miss Jenna, his neighborhood librarian.

After all, I was the one who helped him find the potty books he was so eager to read. I listened with rapt attention as he recounted in great detail his family's trip to Target for an Elmo potty that flushed. I crossed my fingers when he headed for the library bathroom and high-fived him when he came out.

I was Miss Jenna, the friend and champion who helped Everett get his potty started.

In case you're wondering, all was quickly forgiven that day after the initial shock wore off. Everett and I had a nice talk about superhero undergarments and

the merits of a diaperless existence. I think we even managed to rustle up a Spider-Man book or two by way of celebration.

Maybe there's already an Everett in your library life, or maybe you've yet to meet him. Either way, keep this in mind when he shows you his unmentionables.

For this one child, you are magic and unicorns and rainbows. You've made all the difference for him, so be honored and take the credit for a job well done.

And Spider-Man? Your Everett might need him, but you sure don't. You're a librarian, and that makes you amazing indeed. ✂

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Jenna Nemec-Loise is a relationship architect, community builder, teen advocate, and early learning specialist living in Chicago. She is Member Content Editor of the ALSC Everyday Advocacy Website and e-newsletter and Chairperson of the AASL/ALSC/YALSA Interdivisional Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation. Contact her at everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com and find her on Twitter (@ALAJenna).

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