



Another Fish Story. . .

Amy Peterson

For years, my husband promised our daughter, Brooke, she could have a chameleon for her tenth birthday. And even though she cannot remember to hang her backpack on a hook every day, she never forgot the chameleon promise.

As her birthday approached, we made plans to purchase the chameleon (which she later got and named Barry). However, this meant I needed to find a new home for the pet goldfish that had been her pride and joy only a few years earlier.

About this same time, my staff was asking me to find a therapy-certified reading dog for the library, but none of our contacts panned out. So instead of getting a dog, we got . . . reading fish!

I crafted my own “fish phone” (or whisper reader) from three pieces of PVC pipe connected to a phone cord. (Remember when phones had cords? I found mine while cleaning out my in-laws’ basement.)

Now, through the magic of duct tape and imagination, our young library patrons can read to our fish! Kids—including my daughter!—speak quietly into one end of the tube, and their voice is amplified when they hear it back.

This is a great reading tool because it can help shy readers by allowing them to hear their own voice, and the old-school



phone offers something tactile for sensory learners. Plus, it’s just more enjoyable to read when someone (or *some fish!*) is listening.

Stop by and read to our fish some time, or consider a similarly inexpensive option for your library.

Our fish are partial to Dr. Seuss’s classic *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, but let’s face it—they’re a pretty captive audience!



Amy Peterson is the Director of the Lena (WI) Public Library.

Got a great, lighthearted essay? A funny story about children and libraries? Books and babies? Pets and picture books? A not-so-serious look at the world of children’s librarianship? Send your Last Word to Sharon Verbeten at CALeditor@yahoo.com.