

THE LAST WORD

Tortoise by Flashlight

By Melanie Lyttle

Sometimes the best events are those that face unexpected challenges. Like the day a downpour threatened to shut down storytime and the library.

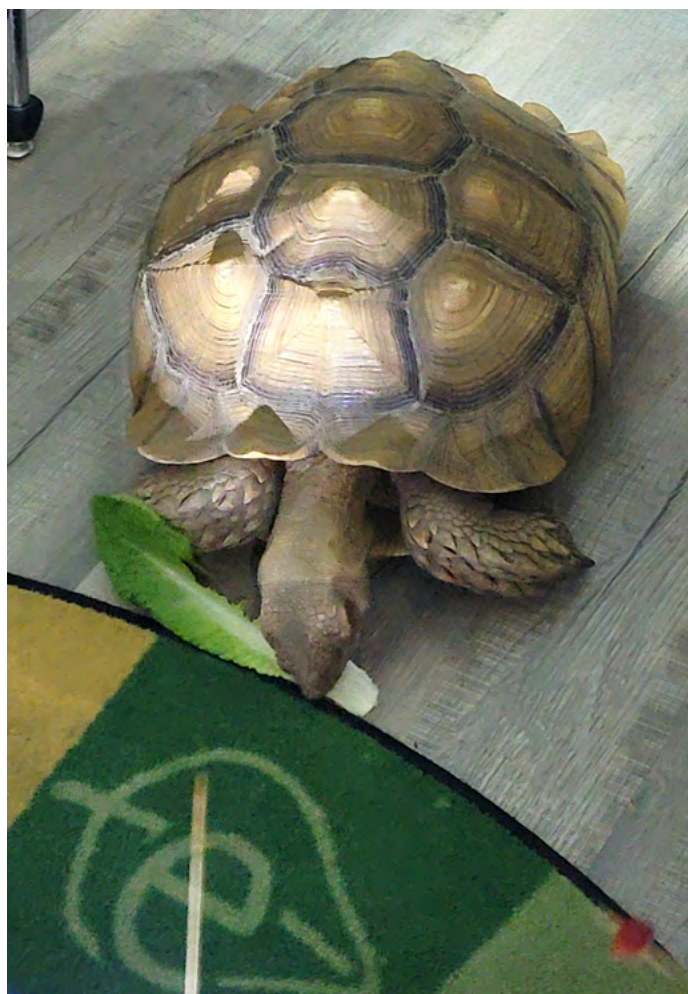
We had booked a guest tortoise named Grevy for our 3 p.m. storytime. But the lights started flickering about 2:45 p.m. with the nearby back-up batteries screeching due to continual power fluctuations.

At 2:55 p.m. there was one child in the room, and Miss Kylie was concerned there would be no one to feed a tortoise. She asked the group of tweens doing an entrepreneurship program in another room if they would like a “tortoise break” so poor Grevy would get something to eat and some attention. They were happy to oblige.

By 3 p.m., the room was full of storytime kids and tweens. People were arriving dripping wet from the deluge outside. A few minutes later, the power went out, and colleagues descended with flashlights and camp lights, thinking the kids (or the tortoise) would be scared, but neither seemed to care!

We weren’t going to let a little darkness stop tortoise tales! The kids didn’t even want to hear the stories; they just wanted to feed Grevy! He ate strawberries from the ends of bamboo skewers, carrots, and lettuce.

Thank you to Grevy and his owner for going with the flow and to the parents who weren’t bothered by storytime by flashlight. And most importantly, thank you to Kylie Bowyer, storytime leader extraordinaire, for reminding us of the magic of storytime, whether you have electricity or not!



Melanie Lyttle is Head of Public Services at Madison (OH) 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 childrenandlibraries@gmail.com.