

AMERICA READS GAZETTE AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY



GRADUATING COORDINATOR SPOTLIGHT

Interview By Holliane Belford and Katherine Anderson

Congratulations to Hannah Swift, our spotlight coordinator for this semester! She is a senior Health Science major with a double minor in Psychology and Sociology from Simpsonville, South Carolina. She has worked with America Reads for the past two years and has an amazing work ethic. When she is not busy with school or going above and beyond for America Reads, she can be found reading, hiking, cooking or watching movies. She will be graduating this May and plans to be a physical therapist, working with children in a pediatric setting.

Get to know more about Hannah through this interview.

Can you tell us why you decided to come to Clemson University? I came to Clemson University because the Health Science major was exactly what I needed to have the best shot at getting into physical therapy school.

You double as a task supervisor and a coordinator. What does your role as task supervisor entail? It entails keeping track of all of the forms that tutors turn in, assigning and looking over deliverables, and posting announcements on google classroom.

What has been your favorite part of working with America Reads? My favorite part of working with America Reads has been seeing in-person tutoring this semester. It has been great to connect with kids in person who I have only seen virtually over the last two years.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to become a coordinator for America Reads? As a coordinator, you should be there to support tutors and interact with the children as much as possible. You should also remember that the program's goal is to promote a love of reading and writing. Through this program, we are really impacting their future.

Thank you so much, Hannah, for being a part of the America Reads Family. We will miss you!

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TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

By Oluwaseun Oti-Aina and Larry Glenn

This year, we are pleased to do a feature on Ms. Taylor Holden, the America Reads contact, at one of our partner schools- Six Mile Elementary.



Tell us a bit about yourself (i.e., where are you from, what motivated you to become a teacher, and how many years have you been teaching?)

I grew up in the Clemson area, and I am a product of the local school district. For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a teacher. When I was in elementary school, I would have the other children in my neighborhood come to my house so that we could play "school." Of course, I would always be the teacher, and I would reteach lessons from earlier in the school day. I have had amazing teachers who all played a role in my path to becoming the teacher I am today. This is my fifth year of teaching, and I have had some amazing experiences and even more amazing students!

How long has your school been a part of America Reads, and what is your role in this process?

This is the first year that my school, Six Mile Elementary, has been a part of the America Reads program. My role is to coordinate students' attendance, participation, and transfer to our after-school program. Before being face-to-face, I would coordinate the use of our school's computer lab and sign students onto the computers.

What do you enjoy about working with the America Reads program?

I love getting to work with the America Reads program! One of my favorite parts is seeing the investment that local college students make with our elementary school children. Each student that participates in the America Reads program loves their tutor and cannot wait for their tutoring day! Many times, I will get stopped in the hallway by a student to ask if they get to come to America Reads that afternoon. I will get a look of disappointment if the answer is "no".

What can you say about the impact of this program on your students?

I have seen the impact that the America Reads program has had on students, including ones from my own classroom. One of the biggest impacts is the desire to read. Many students can develop negative feelings toward reading, but this program is showing students that reading can be fun and engaging.

Any final words to other schools that are considering being a part of this program?

I would highly recommend other schools to participate in the America Reads program. Not only is it a wonderful opportunity for schools to partner with Clemson University, but it is incredible to witness the partnership of college and elementary school students. There is a positive impact on each student that has the opportunity to participate. The America Reads program also impacts their reading and communication skills and helps nurture a love for reading. I am very thankful that I can play a role in the America Reads program!

Thank you for all the hard work you put in daily to ensure the America Reads program runs smoothly at your school. We appreciate all that you do!

Is your school in the Pickens Area, and in need of tutors who provide one-on-one support to elementary school students in reading and writing during after school?

Send the Director an email at oina@g.clemson.edu to indicate your interest. We would love to have you as one of our partner schools in the next school year.

Tutors going above and beyond

This month, we are recognizing Anesia Sims and Katherine Anderson for going above and beyond in tutoring!



Anesia Sims is a Freshman Biological Science major. She started working with America Reads as a tutor in the Fall of 2021. When asked why she decided to join the America Reads team, she stated that she has a passion for helping others and desires to work with students to help them improve their reading skills. When she is not tutoring, Anesia serves as a library supervisor, supervising check-in and check out of America Reads resources and writing excellent book recommendations. She also serves as a content creator, creating appealing pen pal letters for her students.

Anesia's favorite activity in America Reads is administering the "Me and my Reading Profile assessment" because "it allows tutors to understand why and how students feel the way they do about reading. Therefore, we can change the things they do not like to have better outcomes in the end." Her favorite part of working with America Reads is "working with my students. It is great to finally meet them to create a tutor-student relationship" and for them to know that I am here to help them."

When asked what kind of an impact she thinks tutoring has on her students, she says it gives her students "an outlet to talk about their day after tutoring sessions. It is also a great way to let the students know that I care about them. Overall, it creates trust, so the student is willing to make an effort during sessions". Anesia is thankful for the opportunity to be a tutor.

We are so proud of all your hard work, for being reliable tutors, and for your timeliness in turning in deliverables. Great job Anesia and Katherine!



Katherine Anderson is a Freshman Architecture major, and this is her first year as an America Reads tutor. Katherine decided to join America Reads because she "wanted to be involved with Clemson's community" and work-study provided her with this opportunity. She stated further that "I helped tutor in my hometown, and this was the closest opportunity to that so I wanted to try to continue doing that when in college."

Each week, Katherine tutors elementary school students, coordinates WebEx sessions, writes pen pal letters to her students, and supervises the America Reads Library. Her favorite weekly activity is writing pen pal letters because she gets to be more personal with her students. "I also really enjoy that we opened up the Library because it helps me look for things that my student would enjoy reading. Getting recommendations from the other tutors also helps me to plan my lessons", she says.

When asked what her favorite part of working for America Reads is, Katherine says, "getting to work in person with my students." She is also thrilled about her student's progress. She mentioned that her student is "much more comfortable reading out loud" compared to when she started. She further stated that in just a few short weeks, her student is excited about getting to read and practice writing.

A brief background about America Reads at Clemson University

The America Reads Program is an initiative that the Clinton Administration started in 1997 to improve reading and writing among students in kindergarten through third grade. According to various studies, individualized attention to reading and writing can improve reading levels significantly. Clemson student tutors can work on reading and writing skills with students by meeting with them a total of once or twice a week, where they complete writing and spelling activities, shared and guided readings, and so much more. The America Reads Program at Clemson aims to help create a safe, nurturing learning environment where both the students and Clemson student tutors benefit.

Beyond tutoring, Clemson student tutors also have the opportunity to contribute to the smooth running of the organization by completing extra tasks, including library supervision, WebEx coordination, writing and sending pen pal letters to their students and contributing to the newsletter. We are so proud of all the hard work our tutors and coordinators put in weekly!

Meet the America Reads Team



Back row/Left to right: Ciarra Weaver, Emily Davidson, Corban Williams, Larry Glenn
 Middle row/Left to right: Hannah Swift, Marris Meyer, Katherine Anderson, Logan Lindler
 Front row/Left to right: Holliane Belford, Debra Vassey, Oluwaseun Oti-Aina

MEET THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

Oluwaseun Oti-Aina - Director & Newsletter Editor
 Hannah Swift - Task Supervisor & Coordinator
 Holliane Belford - Coordinator
 Cassandra Fox- Tutor
 Katherine Anderson - Tutor
 Larry Glenn- Tutor
 Rund Abdelnabi - Tutor

MEET THE COORDINATORS

Corban Williams- Head Coordinator
 Ciarra Weaver - Coordinator
 Hannah Swift - Coordinator
 Holliane Belford - Coordinator
 Seiarra Reveal - Coordinator

A Message from the Director

Dear Readers,
 It's a delight to have our America Reads End of the Year Celebration in person. We get to see children who participated in the program, their parents, teachers, and principals from our three partner schools (Clemson Elementary, Six Mile Elementary, and West End Elementary). You all made it possible for tutoring to happen. It's been a pleasure working with you all, and I am so glad that we got to work with your children in person. We limited tutoring to an online experience in the past two years due to COVID-19. I am hopeful that this is all behind us now.

By being in-person, children had an opportunity to interact closely with their tutors, and I am so proud of their progress in such a short while. They have become more confident in reading and are more excited to share their ideas through writing. I commend our tutors who have done a fantastic job with their students, and I am also thankful for our coordinators who have offered the needed support to their team of tutors. I am confident that children who have participated in the America Reads program this past year will continue to grow into confident and enthusiastic readers and writers. I hope you enjoy this year's celebration, and I wish you a happy Easter break. - **Oluwaseun Oti-Aina**

We want to thank Kathy Brodsky for being our guest speaker at our End of the Year Celebration and donating 90 copies of her book, "How Talula Turned Her Day Around," to the America Reads program. Kathy was a guest speaker via zoom at the 2021 Celebration. She is the author of 17 books, including 16 picture books and one for adults. Below are some pictures of her children's books which can be found on her website www.kathybrodsky.com or on Amazon.

