



Courtesy of Sandy Krupa Photography

## Treasure Time: Learning to Love the Written Word

by Lee Drescher

In the year 2000, I founded Treasure Time, a nonprofit organization that promotes literacy through the arts for children ages two through ten.

I come from an early childhood and school library background, with over ten years of teaching experience and two master's degrees in education. I love picture books, which I consider to be works of art. I also love to play the guitar and sing with children.

When I can't find the right song, I create one. Over the years, I've compiled a collection of almost fifty original children's songs. Often the tunes are related to a picture book, which I interpret with children through dance, drama, song and hands-on art.

When children have fun reading and they can sing songs, do art work and put on plays instead of sit in a chair and memorize or do work sheets, the written word becomes pleasurable and thus more easily imprinted upon the brain. That is the goal of Treasure Time, to help kids learn to love reading through the practice of artistic endeavors.

Treasure Time programs comply with Massachusetts guidelines for Language Arts. Frequently topics in picture books I choose relate to science, and the program adheres to the latest trend in education known as STEAM (Science, Technology, Education, Art & Math).

For instance, Treasure Time is currently producing Jan Brett's **The Snow Bears**, which is about polar bears and Eskimos.

After the kids produce and present a play in December, they will return in January to learn more about life at the North Pole and build an igloo out of cardboard boxes, which they will paint white and tape or glue together. The structure will then be donated to the Head Start classroom where it will remain until Spring.

As "Mrs. Treasure," I work with children in two different ways. For a story hour, "Mrs. Treasure" comes in costume to sing songs on the guitar, read a picture book, play interactive games and demonstrate a craft. Sometimes unusual things happen and often Mrs. T has something unexpected in her treasure trove.

For a Treasure Time Drama Program with The Treasure Time Storybook Theatre, I work for eight to ten one-hour sessions to make a play out of a picture book. Children learn songs and simple dance moves for a short musical play, which they help to create. They learn lines and help fabricate costumes and scenery.



The final performance is a celebration for families and friends to attend, and a chance for youngsters to participate and give back to their community. The object of this event is to give children an opportunity to bring a picture book to life through the arts of dance, drama and song.

The outcome is not intended to be perfect theatre, just a chance for kids to find joy in literacy by experiencing a book through their multiple intelligences and being part of a team of players on stage.

Treasure Time actually started out as a cable TV show in Wellesley, MA, where I produced over twenty programs, which were on the air for seven years. I also produced two pilot programs in Boston. Now I live in Falmouth, where I've made five or six television programs.

Coordinating kids and a crew is always a challenge, and I'm always grateful for the volunteers at FCTV, who recently helped to make a 2012 Christmas program, including teenagers from the technology club who manned cameras and helped direct the show.

I'm still marketing Treasure Time for broadcast and apps. Because the entertainment business is mostly animated these days and is difficult to break into, I'm continuing to produce literacy/arts programs in educational settings.

For example, this will be my eighth year at K.C. Coombs Elementary School in Mashpee, where I'll work with the children to develop their Spring production. Then I'll take that program to Falmouth and Arts Alive in June.

In the Fall, I'll develop a Christmas program for Highfield Hall in Falmouth, where I also make a TV show.



Off-Cape, I've been working in Boston. I've received a grant for the past three years to bring literacy/arts programs to children in lower socio-economic areas. I just completed a play at the Tierney Center in South Boston, with approximately a dozen elementary school children of mixed ages.

The interactive Treasure Time program also works as an inter-generational lesson, where slightly older, elementary-aged kids put on a play for younger children and preschoolers.

The most recent Tierney Center play was highly successful, and now that these South Boston children have had a gratifying first experience and raised their self-esteem, they will be back in Spring 2013 to stage another performance.

In July 2012, Treasure Time went to The Boston Public library in Southie to put on a play in 90 minutes with about fourteen children. This experimental program was also successful, and Treasure Time will be marketing a new product to libraries and schools during the coming year.

#### **Photographs courtesy of Treasure Time**

Lee M. Drescher developed the Treasure Time concept from a deep understanding of childhood

learning processes gained from more than a decade of teaching and working with young children. She holds two Master's Degrees; one in Early Childhood Education from Wheelock College, and another in School Libraries from BU.

Treasure Time has allowed her to act as an advocate for the importance of the arts in the development of young minds. She works with children's picture books, which she interprets through dance, drama and song. She has produced programs targeting culturally disadvantaged youth for The Citizen's School in New Bedford, and Mashpee, and Boston, MA, where she recently received a grant.

Lee serves on the local Mass Cultural Council and other boards, as she continues to present drama and story programs at area libraries, schools and daycare centers. Besides writing original songs and plays for Treasure Time, she is also working on a historical screenplay, and has produced several children's stories.