

Boulder Valley Spellbinders

Support for Training

\$1,000 Grant from the Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund - March 2014

Spellbinders, a Colorado-based nonprofit organization, trains individuals, primarily aged 60 and better, in the art of oral storytelling and places those individuals as volunteer storytellers in their local public schools or other community facilities from libraries to shelters. Storytellers return to the same classrooms each month, forming mentoring relationships with children that last throughout the year. Spellbinders has 17 autonomous chapters throughout the country, including eight on Colorado's Front Range, that are all committed to practicing the ancient folk art of storytelling to build literacy, character, community and joy.

As of early 2014, the national Spellbinders office was working with passionate volunteers in Boulder to start a Boulder Valley Spellbinders chapter to serve Boulder Valley School District (BVSD). In fact, in March 2014 the Spellbinders' four-day storytelling course began for nine new volunteers in Boulder.

In March 2014, Boulder Valley Spellbinders requested \$1,000 in funding from The Alex 'Tink' Wilson Legacy Fund to cover the estimated \$725 of a second volunteer training course in late summer 2014, and \$175 of the volunteer recruitment cost for that training. The grant was administered by the national Spellbinders office, a 501(c)(3) organization, with no administrative fee.

December 1, 2014

Dear Alex 'Tink' Wilson Legacy Fund Committee,

Thanks to The Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund, Boulder Valley Spellbinders was created this year and held its first training session in March 2014. We had 9 trainees which yielded 3 newly trained and active Spellbinders volunteers.



Storyteller Joe Cox at Louisville Labor Day Festival

Currently we have 9 Spellbinders who hold dual membership in the Longmont, Broomfield and Jeffco chapters. We also have one veteran Spellbinders who is unaffiliated with another chapter as well as one Co-Leader and one volunteer admin assistant.

Our total membership is 14 and we have two trained but not currently active volunteers due to work commitments.

Prior to the existence of BVS, the dual Spellbinders members had joined those existing chapters owing to the fact that although they are Boulder residents with

connections to the BVSD schools, they had no local Spellbinders chapter. Our tellers have programs in the following BVSD schools: Whittier, Coal Creek, Fireside, Flatirons, Ryan and Louisville Elementary. Others tell at our assisted living residential communities such as Frasier Meadows, The Carillon, The Legacy and Wynwood. And others tell at the WOW Children's Museum in Lafayette. We have two tellers who like to tell to preschoolers and have been invited to partner with Bright Beginnings and continue at WOW. We are also in the process of opening up Monarch K-8 in Louisville and have been asked to do a program at Eldorado in Superior. However, our challenge is capturing enough talented and trainable recruit volunteers to place in schools as well as in assisted living communities.

We had scheduled a second training for Oct/Nov 2014 but had to cancel as we did not have enough people registered as anticipated. Our next training will be in January 2015 and will be held at the Villas at the Atrium in Boulder.



BVS 2014 Grads Woody, Catie and Joe

If we had more trained Spellbinders we would have huge access to both the schools and the senior demographic of Boulder. Our Spellbinders Co-Leader has been approved to complete the training to be a trainer. She has been awarded a scholarship for this much needed training. We believe with her flexible schedule that we will be able to create trainings that work not only for retirees but also for the many self-employed interested potential volunteers who want to train and tell around their schedules. We realize we need our own trainers so that we can organize more trainings throughout the year in order to increase our number of volunteers. Our certified trainers are paid at a cost to the BVS chapter.

We have many potential volunteers recruited through Interagency which is the Boulder senior networking organization that has 200+ members. They have been invited, re-invited (and waitlisted) for our next BVS training which is to be held in Jan/Feb 2015 at Villas at the Atrium in Boulder. We have potential recruits vetted from various senior events which are attended by Boomers and young seniors who can be persuaded to consider volunteering as a new lifestyle avocation that will encourage strong intergenerational bonds. Since both Co-Leaders are advocates in the senior service providing community of professionals in Boulder, we have the unique opportunity to attract likely recruits (retirees) through like-minded organizations and targeted audiences.

We have exposed Spellbinders in Boulder through the following events – the Caregiver Symposium in Longmont, Boulder Senior Law Day at Calvary Bible Church in Boulder, Denver Senior Law Day in Denver and various local senior resource fairs for which we have self-promoted in Prime Time for Seniors Newspaper and 50+ Marketplace Newspaper. We have also been able to participate in the Louisville Labor Day Festival, stand alone events at the Boulder Public Library, Meadows Branch and through the Louisville Cultural Center – the Louisville Library for the NaNoWrimo event. At these events we have reached out to the community through mini-storytelling times while we have exposed Spellbinders to parents, grandparents and to local school teachers and librarians who attend these events.



Educating the public about Spellbinders at Denver Senior Law Day.

Through your support we have been able to participate in these events with the purchase of banners, displays, badges and

discounted vendor entry fees. We have also been able to print flyers and brochures about our trainings and events. These are distributed to libraries and senior/recreational community centers as well as senior retirement communities in Boulder and Louisville. We have done email marketing to various organizations for the purpose of recruiting. Examples are Seniors Resource Guide (www.SeniorsResourceGuide.com) and the Blue Book which post our events and meetings on their on-line Google calendars and websites. We have recently been added to the database of the Volunteer Resource Center at CU Boulder – for the purpose of intergenerationally connecting millennials to what is considered our senior community which includes Boomers, the GI Generation and the Silent Generation. Those volunteers are students who are interested in early education, literacy, theater, performing arts, social work and gerontology.

For 2015 we will be participating in Senior Connections in February, Boulder Senior Law Day in August and the Caregiver Symposium in May. It is also possible that we will participate in the Salute to Seniors event in Denver and that we may be able to collaborate with the Alzheimer’s Association’s very first Boulder Walk in August. We also have the potential to

collaborate with A Little Help in Denver which is an intergenerational volunteer program with whom we have connections. The participation of all of the above community events (with the exception of Senior Connections, Salute to Seniors and the Alzheimers Association) have been possible through small financial fees because we have connections with these organizations (through volunteering for planning committees for various Boulder events).

However, going forward, even though we can obtain non-profit discounts in order to afford booths (as well as making in-roads with the BVSD through book fairs, back-to-school events and school festivals), we realize that we have to think larger in order to develop more leadership and expand our volunteer base. Hence the big push to recruit more volunteer storytellers for BVSD programs as well as for our aging Boulder Valley population. We hope to expand our marketing by



Susan Scott-Stevens: Campfire Tales at Meadows Branch Library

creating videos of our storytellers at various school and community events as well as utilize social media.

Boulder Valley Spellbinders feels that it has made progress since its inauguration and is working hard towards increasing awareness of the Spellbinders mission to bring literacy, inspiration and our storytelling art form to both older adults and young listeners. We think it is a win/win for everyone and are grateful that The Alex “Tink” Wilson Legacy Fund has made this intergenerational storytelling and literacy program possible in Boulder.

Here are some photos from our recent events.

Best Regards,

Anne Feist
Boulder Valley Spellbinders Co-Leader



Storyteller Joe Cox at Monarch K-8 School.