

Amy Zaslansky founded The Book Fairies in 2012 as a solution for teachers who were spending their own money to buy books for students without home libraries.

What began as a local book drive that collected 3,000 books evolved into a thriving nonprofit that collects and provides books for 355 high-need schools and organizations across Long Island and the five boroughs. To date, The Book Fairies has donated more than 2 million books.

Zaslansky recently spoke with us about the organization's mission, what makes it unique, how it uses technology, the challenges it's facing, and more.

Q: What is the mission of your organization?

A: The Book Fairies is a not-for-profit organization that collects reading materials for people in need throughout metropolitan New York. The reading materials foster literacy and academic success, provide a respite from personal struggles, and nurture a love of reading across age groups.

Q: What makes The Book Fairies so special and unique compared to other similar organizations?

A: While our primary focus is sourcing books and getting them into the hands of those in need, our impact goes deeper than that. In addition to the books that are upcycled through distribution, we recycle approximately 12 tons of books per year keeping them out of landfills. We are also proud of our partnership with the special needs community and offer more than 180 volunteer opportunities per week to individuals in day-habilitation programs.

Q: What's your favorite part of what you do?

A: The best part of the job is watching a child's face light up when they find just the right book. I also love helping teachers finally be able to create full classroom libraries that engage students at all reading levels.



Q: What is the biggest challenge of your job and how have you dealt with that challenge?

A: One of the biggest challenges for any founder is hiring the right people who share the passion and commitment for the cause. Fortunately, as we continue to grow and add employees, The Book Fairies has built a strong leadership team with our new executive director, Eileen Minogue, and program coordinator, Sherry McGrath. The Book Fairies is now better positioned to directly impact Long Island's literacy needs.

Q: What would you say are the biggest challenges facing your organization?

A: Funding is always a challenge when there are competing nonprofits doing incredible work. We are constantly looking for ways to increase our presence, so we become a charity of choice for corporations and individuals. Additionally, it's challenging to locate space that is affordable or donated so we can house the thousands of books until they are ready to be distributed.

Q: How are e-books and other technologies impacting your organization?

A: Contrary to popular belief, e-books are not besting print books. It's also notable that students are able to better retain information they read in a book versus a digital device. However, we love that the e-reader makes it more convenient for people to have multiple books at once. We encourage people to donate their e-readers so we can give them to children in foster care who frequently move between houses.



Q: Are there new initiatives or programs at your organization that you can tell us about?

A: The Book Fairies is excited to host our first "Paper Chase" scavenger hunt fundraising event this spring. We'll bring teams together from across Long Island for a fun day of solving clues and completing challenging tasks. It's going to be a great family day that raises money to support literacy initiatives in our own backyard. We are in the process of finalizing the details for the Paper Chase.

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Amy with Educators receiving FREE books at one of its Community Book Fairs