

Gallant
Kids

Sharing Magic

By Robert Lerosé

Danay Ferguson loves to read. Her parents often find her awake past her bedtime, under the covers with a flashlight, racing to the end of a story.

"If you're reading, you can be in your own world and do almost anything you want," she says.

The Harry Potter books are her favorites. But to Danay, all books have a magic of their own.

Creating Change

Danay wanted to open a bookstore, so she did some research. She learned that in low-income neighborhoods, there may be only 1 book for every 300 kids, while higher-income neighborhoods average several books per household. Danay was shocked to find out that kids near her may not own books or get to visit a library. She decided that needed to change.

So at age eight Danay started an organization to share her love of reading. Reading Heart collects books that are donated by people in the community. Then Danay and her family and friends hand them out (free!) to

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kids in schools, hospitals, and low-income neighborhoods. In four years, they've given away nearly 400,000 books!

On visits to schools, Danay turns the book giveaway into a party. With dancing, free T-shirts, and tables of books, her "Book Tour" has visited more than 150 schools in her area to get kids excited about reading.

After kids choose their books, Danay gives them a challenge.

"It's like building mini libraries."

"They can keep their book for as long as they like," she says. "But when they're done with it, they share it with a friend." By trading books, Danay explains, kids get to read even more, yet still have a book to keep. "It's like building mini libraries for each kid. When we give 500 kids a book to share, each kid has the chance to read 500 books!"

Once a year, Danay puts on

a Reading Extravaganza at a neighborhood park. More than 4,000 people walk away with bags full of free books they can read over the summer.

Danay loves helping others discover the magic of reading. "It's an amazing feeling to see a kid's smile when they get a book for the first time."

Highlights is proud to know this Gallant Kid. 

