

A bunch of boys yelled out "saving someone!" Indeed. When I got to "tribute" I suddenly realized I would not be able to easily explain it since the term evokes so much for me. A shy little 4th grade girl slowly raised her hand and quietly but confidently stated, "Thank you and remember. "I was stunned. Tears welled up in my eyes as I repeated to everyone what she had said. "That's exactly right! I couldn't have said it better myself. I wrote the book as a thank you to my wonderful father and the wonderful man who rescued him, and as a tribute to them both so we would remember them. " I looked at her and saw that she was smiling proudly as my knees were still a bit wobbly. "I'm not sure I can continue talking after that!" Everyone laughed and I turned to the little girl and said, "Thank you. You gave me such a gift by saying that."

When I got back to work and told some colleagues about this experience, they all got tears in *their* eyes. "That is amazing! Kids are so insightful." My boss even asked if my new career was now going to be teaching 4th grade since I was so struck by what happened.

"People are hungry for stories. It's part of our very being. Storytelling is a form of history, of immortality too. It goes from one generation to another," said Studs Terkel, the consummate storyteller best known for his oral histories of everyday Americans. Storytelling is an age old tradition of passing on individual, family, and cultural experiences. Stories about an experience that has touched your heart have the power to touch someone else's heart as well. Stories connect us deeply to each other and foster empathy. They can challenge our assumptions and create new ways of perceiving, and ultimately serve as catalysts for new ways of acting.

My friend and colleague, Dr. Jon Herzenberg, reminded me of the online non-profit Kiva organization as a great example of the power of stories to be transformational. Kiva's mission is to connect people through lending as little as \$25 in order to alleviate poverty around the world. "We're inspired to contribute based on the human story," Jon explains. "We connect to people's aspirations. We trust a global stranger whose story moves us to act."