

StoryCorps Interview at the Naturita Community Library
Betty Stephens and Kelli Flint

Betty: I remember you coming to the library, with your kids and the kids that you used to watch. And, you guys would come in and get books usually on your way home from the park.

Kelli: Mmmhmm.

Betty: And you started out in our tiny little library where, if we turned our office chairs at the same time, our elbows literally, literally bumped. [laughter] And, I also remember walking out of this library about the time we knew that we were going to be hiring somebody and, more or less, tracking you down on the street and asking if you had applied, and encouraging you to come in and apply because I knew how much you loved libraries.

Kelli: You did; I remember that. I was walking home from school with my kids and you had pulled over and said, "You need to get a resume and you need to apply here." [laughter] Because I did, I loved taking the kids to the park and I was babysitting my nieces at that point, and every day we'd come to the library and we'd always come to storytime, and the kids just absolutely loved it and I always thought that it was such a good experience for them. And, so, when I had to opportunity to come in, it was just . . ., I didn't even think twice about it.

Betty: And how was your first summer program?

Kelli: [laughter] It was scary. I remember making a bean bag toss with a shark and I spent about a week trying to get this shark just perfect and, I was so, I think, so scared and nervous that I just focused all my attention on that shark. And it was a little overwhelming having that many kids. How many kids usually come to the summer program?

Betty: I think we were averaging sixty by then.

Kelli: And, having them all here at the library and trying to keep track of all of them and make sure they're all having fun and getting a good experience was definitely overwhelming.

Betty: And now I bring my granddaughter to storytime, so . . .

Kelli: You do.

Betty: . . . That's a kinship that we've shared—is that you and I both want children to, we want everybody to read.

Kelli: Right.

Betty: But we know that it starts when they're little.

Kelli: Yes.

Betty: And if you, if you can encourage kids who would never touch a book to be curious enough to pick one up, to even look at the pictures, then you've gained another reader. Overall, though, people know that this is a place that is for them and to help them. If there were a mat out there that literally said "Welcome," they would know that it is meant and heartfelt in here. And, the fact that the mat out there doesn't say that and they know it anyway speaks so loudly to how involved this staff has been with the community and made this building not just walls and mortar and brick—or, in our case, straw bales and stucco—it has made this building a home, a community center, a vibrant place, a heartbeat in the community.