

BabyRead's Janice Garcia interviewed Rose Lowe. Ms. Lowe has been a BabyRead volunteer since October 2018. She retired as an Information Technology professor at Clemson University in 2018 however she is currently teaching a course in Microsoft Access and Excel. She is a reader and has served in a variety of BabyRead administrative positions.

Ms. Garcia began by asking Ms. Lowe how she first became a BabyRead volunteer. She saw a BabyRead flyer in a local bookstore and became a volunteer in 2018 after talking to the founder, Caren von Hippel. A mother of four children, Ms. Lowe understood the value of reading, and started reading to them before they were born. Her favorite age group is 2- to 4-year-olds.

Among her many BabyRead responsibilities is as the Belk Charity Sale Coordinator. Belk hosts its charity sales event twice a year; it is one of BabyRead's largest sources of income. Shoppers buy a \$5 ticket with proceeds going to the local charity. The \$5 is redeemed during the sales event purchase and includes additional savings of 25% per ticket and is combined with other store mark downs for significant overall savings. The ticket sales typically last about three weeks and the sale event lasts a few days. Lay away purchases are an option. Charitable organizations sign up for two-hour slots and volunteers man the position at one of the entrances to sell tickets. Ms. Lowe and Ms. Garcia find the event to be a good lowkey way to meet other BabyRead volunteers and to tell the public about BabyRead. Ms. Garcia noted 90+ percent of BabyRead donations go toward the purchase of books for BabyRead families.

Ms. Lowe is a member of BabyRead's administrative staff. She interviews new potential volunteers and performs several administrative functions that leverage her Excel and Access expertise. She also does some public speaking on behalf of BabyRead (e.g., the Rotary Club, and the local Daughters of the American Revolution and NAACP chapters).

Ms. Lowe noted the three things BabyRead requires to be successful: volunteers, families and money. She also helps with the family sign up events at schools (e.g., Back to School and Literacy Nights). She also helps during the annual School District of Oconee County (SDOC) 4K sign up event which is one of BabyRead's biggest family sign up event each year.

Ms. Garcia provided an overview of the typical family session: meet twice a month at a public place for about an hour. The time and place are coordinated between the reader and the caregiver who is typically the mom but can be other family members too. The program is totally free for the family except for a time commitment of a couple of hours per month. Each child receives two free age-appropriate books per month. The readers share reading tips and provide other brain-stimulating activities such as finger play, singing songs and rhyming.

Ms. Lowe has also been a reader for two families. She enjoys finding out about the background of the families and finds a great deal of satisfaction modeling behavior for the mom and young children. Her first family had a six-month old child that she read with. Older children would

often attend the sessions and they began to read to the toddler too. Rose took over for another family after their reader moved from the area. English was the second language for this Hispanic family and the mom enjoyed the sessions as it expanded her English vocabulary in addition to helping the child. As with some other Hispanic families, the mom was somewhat reserved, so the reading sessions helped her gain self-confidence too. Ms. Garcia interviews families about 3 times a year as part of the BabyRead newsletter. She shared the nearly universal response from moms/caregivers about the positive impact readers have especially since they have already raised their families and provide mature non-judgmental feedback that might be better received than advice from family members and relatives. Ms. Lowe said she feels great about contributing to the families; the feeling is reciprocated because her grandchildren are older, so she gets the joy of sharing time with young ones. Ms. Garcia and Ms. Lowe said they do talk about books with their older children, often ordering the same book so they can discuss them.

Ms. Garcia asked about volunteering with BabyRead. Ms. Lowe responded it's a great organization with a super staff but the real impact is how the volunteers contribute to getting children ready for school. The volunteers help children understand books and begin the love of reading. The child's ability to read and enjoy reading opens the world to them without even leaving home. Ms. Lowe encouraged the audience to visit our website, learn about the organization and our mission, and hopefully volunteer to become a BabyRead reader.

Ms. Garcia closed by thanking Ms. Lowe and providing the website ([www.babyread.org](http://www.babyread.org)).