

By Debi Lucke

# THE STORIED MS. GINNY

For thirty-one years, it's been Ms. Ginny's job to ever so gently pry open the minds of children. Wondrously, this can be accomplished with puppets, songs, and books read aloud in funny voices.

Being read to helps you learn to verbalise and teaches you how to express your thoughts.

Perhaps you were once upon a time one of the children with sponge-like brains absorbing Ms. Ginny's words. No doubt you also soaked up the themes of inclusion and acceptance lurking in the middle of the picturebook.

In 1989, when Ms. Ginny arrived, Beacon was a very different place. Main Street was boarded up. Ms. Ginny wasn't just the children's librarian. She was Howland Public Library's entire children's program.

It was sorely needed. I started thinking about fostering the little ones. We collaborated with Head Start and the MLK Center.

After work, she'd drive to Albany to earn her MSIS.

No one really teaches you how to interact with children. I took it upon myself to learn their psychology.

Beacon's kids are divided between four elementary schools. They don't get to meet. Ms. Ginny's after-school programs such as Lego Club, Anime, and Crazy Eights (math) bring the kids together by shared interest. She was not above using refreshments to lure them in.

Ginny Figlia

DRAGONS ROAM WILD, HAVE TERRIBLY SHARP TEETH, AND HUNT DAY AND NIGHT.

Teens need free places to hang out together. Forty to fifty would come to Gaming Club.

One teen wanted to meet other kids on the spectrum, like herself. With help from The Anderson Center, Ms. Ginny launched YA Connections

A lot of nice friendships have formed.

And that, my friends, is the story of how Ms. Ginny helped Beacon grow up to be what it is today.