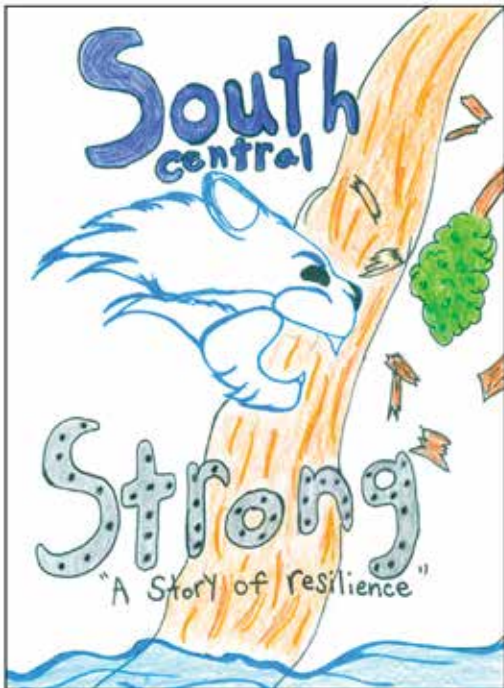


More Than a Classbook: A Story of Strength and Resilience



Written and illustrated by Mrs. Farquhar's Class
South Central Elementary School 2024-25

Where the Story Begins

In the small, close-knit community of South Central, Tennessee, life was steady and familiar. Families worked hard, students thrived in their schools and the town moved with a quiet resilience. But when a devastating hurricane struck, everything changed. Bridges collapsed, homes were lost and the community found itself physically and emotionally isolated.

For Lynn Farquhar, a first-year teacher and 20-year Navy veteran, the disaster became more than just a storm. It was a turning point for her students, her school and the entire town. What started as a simple classroom activity turned into something far more powerful. It became a testament to resilience, showing that publishing is more than just putting words on a page—it's a way to preserve history, lift voices and foster healing.



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From Holiday Project to Historic Chronicle

Before the hurricane, Lynn had planned a fun holiday activity: a Christmas recipe book. Her fourth and fifth-grade students would collect their favorite family recipes, publish them and gift the finished classbook to loved ones.

It was meant to be a lighthearted introduction to writing and publishing—a way to get students excited about storytelling while creating something special to take home.

Then the floodwaters came. The school became a shelter. Families slept in classrooms. Helicopters dropped supplies. The town came together in ways Lynn had never seen—not during her military service nor in any disaster she'd experience.

“I’ve seen a lot in my lifetime,” Lynn said, “but I’ve never seen a community pull together like this. No questions asked—just people helping people.”

In the midst of the chaos, someone found an old book—a memory from 2000 filled with stories written by students

about the town's past. It was a time capsule, a snapshot of life before.

Someone said, "How cool would it be if we did another book?"

Lynn was right there when the idea sparked. And just like that, the Christmas recipe classbook transformed into something much bigger.

Giving Students a Voice

Within weeks of returning to school, Lynn's students were ready. They began conducting interviews, collecting firsthand accounts and writing about their experiences. They captured the damage, the fear—but most importantly, the strength of their community.

"These kids didn't just go a few weeks and then try to write—they were ready from day one," Lynn said. "They were ready to ask family members and do interviews."

One of the most striking quotes to come out of the student interviews came from an eighth grader. When asked how she had gotten through the aftermath of the hurricane, she said, "Thug it out and trust in the Lord."

Though she wasn't one of the authors in the classbook, her words were written down by another student. The phrase captured something real—an honest, heartfelt reflection of how many in the community endured hardship with grit and faith.





During the flood my family spent days volunteering at the fire department. My Mom, brother and I worked to feed first responders and run errands. My dad is a firefighter and AEMT. He helped people and worked closely with Emergency Management.

The Moment Everything Changed

When the classbooks arrived, the energy shifted.

The community embraced it. Families shared stories and cheered on the young authors. A local church hosted a book signing, complete with a red carpet, gold stars and a celebration that made every student feel like a star.

South Central Strong, A Story of Resilience, made its way into the hands of Tennessee's literacy director, who put it in the Dolly Parton Foundation. Then the governor heard about it. Then a state senator.

Suddenly, this small-town classbook was making waves far beyond South Central.

"I took one of the copies of the books around and had the kids sign it, and they said, 'Do I have to sign another one?'" Lynn said. "They're 10 and 11-year-olds, it's a book to them, but to us adults, it's so much more than just a book."

A Lasting Legacy

For Lynn, the classbook represents more than just words on a page. It's a symbol of how powerful student voices can be—and how publishing can create proud moments that last a lifetime.

"This wasn't just an assignment that Miss Lynn asked them to do or just something that they do for a grade." Lynn said, "It was 'let's record this while it's fresh in our minds, let's never forget this and let's remember that we can

thug it out and trust in the Lord.”

For teachers everywhere, this story is a powerful reminder: Publishing isn't just about writing. It's about empowering students, building confidence and creating something that will outlast the school year.

In South Central, Tennessee, a classbook became a lifeline. And for Lynn Farquhar and her class, publishing proved that even the smallest voices can make the biggest impact.

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