

T.A. Barron: 'Follow your dreams'

By Jennifer Beckstrand
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If "A life...is measured not by its length, but by the worth of its deeds, and the power of its dreams," (from *The Mirror of Merlin* by T.A. Barron). Author T.A. Barron writes to inspire young people to believe in their dreams and follow those dreams wherever they lead. Barron spoke with students and parents at five schools last week as a guest of the "Davis Reads" Foundation.



Barron can tell people something about chasing dreams. After his first book, written while he was at Oxford University in England, was rejected 42 times, Barron decided he needed to get a "real" job.

"To be a writer was always my dream," he says, but after being turned down that many times, earning a living became a higher priority. Quickly moving up the corporate ladder, Barron found himself in New York, president of a profitable venture capital firm. As successful as he was, he longed for the beauty of his boyhood home in Colorado.

He had recently married, and he and his wife both knew they didn't want to raise a family in New York. So, one day he walked into the boardroom, reported on how profitable the company was, and resigned. "They thought I was completely stark raving mad," he says.

Seventeen years and 24 books later, Barron says, "I haven't had a millisecond of looking back. I'm the luckiest guy in the world." Before Barron left New York, a dear friend he looked up to as a grandfather, passed away.

At about the same time his daughter, Denali, was born, and so was Barron's first publishing success, *Heartlight*. "It is a story to link the circle of life and death," he says. "The girl (in the story) isn't anything famous, but she has a lot of love for her grandfather."

The characters featured in Barron's books are young people who, like young Merlin in *The Lost Years of Merlin*, "have the stuff of a hero." "If you see any book with T.A. Barron on the cover you will always find that heroic young person in the middle of it," he says.

Barron has five children of his own and his latest book, nonfiction *The Hero's Trail*, was written because "I'm a dad and I want my kids to believe they can be a hero. Heroes are all about not what you can see. They're about their heart."

Barron has established the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, which gives 10 scholarships and 15 honorable mention awards to young people who are heroes in their everyday lives. The prize is named for Barron's mother, whom he considers one of his heroes.

Along with his love for young people, which is apparent in many of Barron's books, love of nature is also a prevalent theme. Barron grew up on a ranch on Colorado, and he and his family live in Boulder. He says they love the outdoors and are very fond of hiking the Colorado Rockies. His favorite hike in Utah is Zions National Park.

Barron has high praise for the Davis Reads Foundation as well as the schools in the Davis district. He is very impressed at how well prepared students were to hear his presentation. "I've had a fabulous experience at all four schools. I can tell things here in Davis County are really focused on the education of children."

Barron has successfully followed his dreams to a stellar writing career, and along the way has inspired many others to dream big. "I don't write books to amuse people," he says, "I write to pass on some big idea, to inspire kids." Inspire them to believe in the power of their dreams.