Alferd Williams — He couldn't read this. Until 70. LITERACY — Pass It On. VALUES.COM THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE

Literacy Backstory

Alferd Williams (b. 1937) was one of nine children born into a family of sharecroppers in Eudora, Arizona. When he was a boy, his family could not afford for both he and his twin brother to be gone all day to school. In order for both boys to get some education, Alferd's mother devised a plan to alternate days where one twin would go to school while the other stayed home to help on the farm. However, Alferd's twin would often rise early and sneak away to school, leaving Alferd to work long days on the farm throughout his school years. As a result, Alferd never learned to read.

Many decades later, Alferd, then a resident of Saint Joseph, Missouri, began to help a single mother by walking her three children to and from school. The 68-year-old Alferd acted as a parent to the children and helped care for them every afternoon. What he could not help them with, however, was their homework.

When the children's first grade teacher, Alesia Hamilton, discovered that Alferd could not read the notes she had been sending home with the children, she began to teach him how to read. In the fall of 2006, Alferd enrolled as a first grade student.

After completing the first grade, Alferd chose to stay in Alesia's class and continue to learn with the new first graders. Alesia encouraged Alferd's passion for reading and eventually, for teaching children to read. In fact, parents said their children would come home excited, with stories about how Alferd had helped them learn to read.

Alferd is still in Alesia's class, where he plans to stay until he completes his GED. Literacy has changed his life and opened a world of opportunities. His story shows us that it is never too late to begin.

Pass It On.

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