

DONOR Spotlight

Eli Bloodworth found out he could help other children access the joy of PJ Library. He reached for his tzedakah box.

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“I want to help other Jewish kids so they can read Jewish books too.”

So says Eli Bloodworth, who was 8 years old when he decided to donate to PJ Library. His family in Milledgeville, Georgia received a letter in the mail that described how important gifts of all sizes are to deliver PJ Library books to children around the world. Eli acted quickly: “He didn’t even say anything about it. He just took the envelope off the counter, and it reappeared, filled with a bunch of money from his PJ Library tzedakah box,” says his mother, Allison Bloodworth.

“He said he wanted to make sure that everybody would keep getting PJ Library books,” she recalls, “because he has seen the value in his life and in his younger brother’s life.”

The Bloodworth family started receiving PJ Library books in 2018, when Eli was 5. Living in the small town of Milledgeville, 30 miles from Macon, Georgia, the family doesn’t have much access to a Jewish community. They only learned about PJ Library when Eli’s father, Brian, spotted a PJ Library bookmark at a diner on a trip to Atlanta with Eli. “Brian was like, ‘You’re not going to believe what I found!’” recalls Allison. The program was perfect for Eli, who was already an avid reader.

Eli and the whole family (including little brother Cohen, who has just started receiving books) soon found that the value of PJ Library transcended engaging stories. For Brian, who is not Jewish, it was a new way to learn about Jewish customs alongside his sons. And for Eli, it was an incredible boost to his Jewish identity.

Seeing himself reflected in books is a big deal for Eli, who is now 9. He travels weekly to a synagogue in Macon for Hebrew school but finds that with many of his friends in Milledgeville, “I have to explain things every holiday,” he says. “I feel lonely because I like



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The Bloodworth family: Cohen, Brian, Allison, and Eli.

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BLOODWORTH

celebrating with other Jewish kids.” PJ Library books, however, gave him helpful language to explain the holidays and their meaning to his friends.

Another benefit? Seeing Jewish experiences normalized in the books has given Eli the confidence to ask for the same in his town. “When Eli was 6, we were driving through downtown. There was a Christmas tree up and Christmas decorations everywhere,” Allison remembers. “Eli asked, ‘Why is there no menorah?’ Because he had been reading all these PJ Library books, he was like, where are we represented?”

That question inspired Allison to start a crowdfunding campaign, and now there is a menorah in downtown Milledgeville, which Eli says is “really cool.”

“Everyone comes out to light it with us,” he explains. “It makes me feel included and excited.” That excitement about Jewish inclusion is why he chose to donate to PJ Library and recommends others do the same. “It’s going to a good cause for other kids.”

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