

“Awesome, moving, inspiring!”

“John brings great experience to grief and loss for adolescents.”

“Such a powerful reminder of what we do the impact it has on how we deal with clients”.

Mr. Derryberry has presented his moving real life story for Four Oaks employees on three different occasions. As a trainer with years of experience in social work I am amazed by John’s passion to help others see how they can better understand working with you. John has experience beyond his years. Four Oaks is blessed to have him on staff. I would recommend John to speak in educational settings, a child welfare organization, hospice groups etc.

“ John’s personal triumph is amazing!”

La Rae Heyl, Training Coordinator, Four Oaks

I just wanted to write a thank you for coming to my school. My friends and I really liked your speech and your book. You really took me from where you were at the time and led it through the dark times to how you dealt. It must have been crushing to lose your father, he sounded like a great guy, but telling your story helped me see that I can overcome problems in my own life. Your speech was intense. You could tell the audience was feeling pieces of the emotions that you felt as a confused teenager.

Losing your dad is one thing but then seeing your best friend pass right in front of you, John I don’t know how you could ever move on. When I started to read how you coped with the losses I felt you were running away and maybe you were. But some of the words from your speech came together as I read the book I began to understand how you found how your way to make it through. It has been inspiring, I hope your message reaches other kids or adults who feel in over their heads.

Sincerely,
Jim

I’ve gotten lots of good feedback on your talk. The students thought it both educational and inspirational. They appreciated your impassioned style and accessibility to them. Many saw in your commentary aspects of their own history and losses they have experienced. In sum, it was an excellent contribution to the class.

Best,
John Harvey, Professor of Psychology, University of Iowa

Well, I finished reading Dave's brother's book. I liked it. It was an easy read for the obvious reason that it wasn't long but also because it sucked me in. I wanted to find out how it ended and I wanted to find out right then and there. If I had the time I would've read it in a 24-hour marathon but had to put it down and pick it up again when I could fit it in. I found myself thinking about the circumstances of his life while I was doing other things too so it definitely makes an impact on the reader. There were a few moments when I felt myself getting choked up. He did a really good job of characterizing his emotions so that you knew just what he was going through even if you've never experienced it. Like I said, it sucked me in.

I think this book would be an appropriate read for school age kids for several reasons. The main reason is the connection that I think the students would have with an author at their age and maturity level. I can see them being interested in the content, commenting on it emotionally, analyzing the lessons learned from it and drawing parallels to their own life from it. This, of course, I say after it runs through spell check one more time!! (Dave already mentioned that, I know)

I want to pass it along to some of the English teachers. There are some that I know would take the time to read it and consider putting it on a "summer reading list" for starters. I'll let you know what their feedback is...

Tell Dave that I thank him for sharing this with me and asking for my opinion. I'm glad I read it; it was well worth the time reading it. I sure will do what I can to promote it when the opportunity presents itself.

Kelly

Anyone who has had the pleasure of watching John Derryberry lead a group of children will recognize immediately that he has a gift; a special way of connecting with the kids and encouraging them to bring out their best.

After reading his book, it is also apparent that he has another special gift; the ability to express thought and emotion in a manner that touches the reader and inspires reflection.

I am thoroughly convinced that it is the combination of these two gifts that truly separates John Derryberry from others. His potential to reach and inspire youth is unlimited!

-Rachel Scott
YWCA Youth Director
President, Iowa Afterschool Association

Thank you so much for coming to share your story with our teens and parents at Zion Lutheran Church over the last couple of months. Each visit has been a true blessing to several members of our congregation. Your style of bringing humor into a very personal story welcomed great conversation with the groups about teen emotions, suicide, death, family dynamics, resources available for help, etc. Thank you!

Here are a few quotes from kids and adults in our congregation after you left:

“He really spoke of feelings that I have had in the past?”

“He was great to listen to.”

“Wow, how fragile we are and how important it is to continue to reach out to others.”

“I would love to have more conversations with John.”

“I have reconnected with God. It is a great feeling.”

“I look at death in a different way!”

“This was encouraging to me as a mom, knowing that the hard work of continuing to connect with my teen is important.”

Having your book, “Defending a Ghost”, available has been a wonderful, tangible, resource for us to have for discussion sessions and/or available for families to read and discuss in their homes. Thank you!

But most importantly, John, we truly appreciate your passion for helping others. Your willingness to visit in large or small groups, individually, and to adjust to the population was amazing. Your willingness to return and follow up with families is a true sign of your concern and caring nature for others. You certainly have a gift, a story, and lots of energy that I know many of us value! Thank you!

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. John, I pray you will continue to serve God through your journey of speaking and look forward to you coming to Zion again. Please feel free to provide my name to others or use this letter as a letter of reference

Peace,

Sara Hollander, Minister of Youth and Family, Zion Lutheran Church

Ok...perhaps you should send a copy to the Kleenex company because I sure kept them in business while reading your book.

Thanks for sharing in such an honest and candid way.

Although the enormity of the loss of a parent is something I very luckily cannot understand, your book is relevant to anyone who has suffered a major loss and grieved, including children of divorced parents or having an absent parent.

I really can't help, but think that instructors in death and dying classes might be interested in your journey??? It was a very good read.

Much love, Yvon

This is Scott Chronister emailing. Your sister gave me your book and your email address at work. I just wanted you to know that I think it took a lot of stones to write the book and I read it cover to cover. I've got a lot of respect for you doing what you did. I think that there are a lot of kids who could benefit from your story. Should you ever come back to Ohio (if I'm teaching here) I would love to have you in my class or school. Being a hoops guy and now getting into coaching, I could really relate to everything about basketball.

I hope things work out well for you and people get to hear your message. More than anything, I wanted you to know the level of respect I have for what you've been through and how you are turning all of the negativity into something positive.

Scott

I just wanted to tell you I finished your book yesterday and I loved it. When I read the letter to your Mom I had to put the book down for several minutes while I cried. After I finished crying I read chapter one. Thanks for sharing your story with me and everyone. You are bold and courageous and will make a difference in so many people's lives. Your story (and memories of you) will stay with me...

Wendy

Okay so wow...of course you know I opened the package and got your book. I sat down and read the entire thing tonight....and only cried like four times I think. I just wanted to write to you and tell you that it was an outstanding book. I knew that you had talent, but to allow people into the dark moments in your life and write so meticulously about them, I'm more than impressed. Congratulations on the success and even more for following your heart and dreams. Everyone that you have in your life you've kept there for a reason and from what it sounds like will be sticking around to watch you become someone even more wonderful than he ever expected even for himself. I'm glad we met, and have had all the experiences we have. Once again....you're one in a million JP no one will ever forget that.

**Always,
Katie**

I knew you before I knew your story, and the who man is my friend today would certainly not be the person I respect were it not for one powerful character trait — drive. The drive to complete your book. The drive to constantly improve yourself. That sweet drive to the hoop. The drive to share what life has taught you so that others may benefit. The drive to work with troubled youth because on some level I think you will always consider yourself one. I hope that people understand that about you as share your story with the world. When I think of the good you do with your drive I'm at once reminded of both the youthful optimism that we all have before life shows itself to us in it's sometimes cruel (sometimes beautiful ways), as well as the reality and responsibility of manhood. To quote the Magnetic Fields, "Drive on, Driver."

**Your Friend,
Adam Richard Rottinghaus**