

Source: <https://www.gainesvilletimes.com/news/how-tomecon-ignites-stronger-passion-reading-young-minds/>  
**TomeCon ignites a stronger passion for reading in young minds**

Kelsey Richardson

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*Left - Students attending TomeCon 2019 Tuesday, March 12, 2019, at the University of North Georgia Gainesville campus visit the Kennesaw State University iTeach truck between sessions. - photo by Scott Rogers*  
*Right – Josie Bailey of Atlanta and students at the TomeCon session*

Kids eagerly rushed up to meet their favorite authors at [TomeCon 2019](#), grabbing autographs and expressing their undeniable fondness for the worlds and plots the writers created. The conference attracted nearly 2,100 students, parents and volunteers to the University of North Georgia's Gainesville campus on Tuesday, March 12.

"I love seeing their eyes light up over the books, and talking to each other and meeting an author in person," said Rebecca Hamby, executive board member of the Tome Student Literacy Society. "Authors are rockstars at TomeCon. It's just a fun day helping the community." The students immersed themselves in a plethora of literacy-themed sessions presented by authors, editors, storytellers and other experts in the field.

Around 200 schools from Georgia were represented, and 200 volunteers came out to run the conference. Hamby said she started the nonprofit with her sister, Jennifer Parker, and friend, Shelby Day, in 2012. Their organization serves students from third grade to seniors in high school through a digital school book club program.

Each year in February, Tome releases 36 book award nominees for schools' Tome chapters to read. The nonprofit additionally offers around 15 competitions for students and schools to participate in, such as the Reading Bowl.

... Laughter and applause erupted from Josie Bailey's session, which encompassed African folktales and fables, and the importance of collecting one's own personal story.

"What you do now is determining your story," Bailey said. "You're writing your story every day. I want you to physically write it down, talk to your parents and just be nosy."

Adding energy to the crowd, Bailey asked students and teachers to come up to the front of the room for a dramatic interpretation of two Shel Silverstein poems.

Not being afraid to act silly and let their emotions run wild, kids and adults recited two different poems.

"I loved the way she told the stories," Christy Walden, a fifth-grader from Fairview Elementary School said. "She showed us how to put more emotion into what you say and in different stories."

... Hamby said if people want to spread a love of reading to young people, to consider becoming a sponsor of the Tome Student Literacy Society. She aims to lower the cost of student tickets, and in order to do that Hamby said the conference needs more support.

For more information about the nonprofit visit [www.tomesociety.org](http://www.tomesociety.org).