Jess McCort is a strong woman who turned her childhood love of reading into a career.

Role Models in Residence:

Jessica McCort

Pittsburgh Strong Girls Strong Women
Dear SWSG Girls,

When I was about the age you are now, I lived in a very small “coal-patch” town about an hour south of Pittsburgh. Our town was so small, it didn’t even have a stop light. My dad was a coal miner, which meant that he went underground to work every day – I thought that was scary, but he worked really hard and I was proud of that.

The house we lived in was nestled along the Monongahela (Mo - nah - gah - hee - la) River, and my bedroom window was about 15 feet from a set of railroad tracks. I would sit in my room every night and watch the train roll by, wondering where it was going to and where it had come from.

Because my parents didn’t have much money, I never really had the opportunity to travel anywhere that was much different from where I lived. The first time I took a plane trip, I was 20 years old! But I loved to read, and my books took me so many different places and helped me see how people who were different than me lived – what they thought, who they loved, where they worked.

Every week, my mom would get me a new book from the store or the library. I loved opening those books when she handed them to me, and I especially loved the ones that told stories about strong girls. Eventually (ee - ven - choo - ah - lee), I went on to college to study literature (lit - er - ah - chur). Now, as a college professor, I teach my students about strong women writers and the characters they create. We spend our time in class reading and talking about books and the impact they can have on the world.

I love my job and working with my students, many of whom are young women. Maybe one day I will see you in my classroom at Point Park (the University where I teach) and we can study these stories together.

Good luck writing your own chapters!

Jess McCort