

Gorp
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Date of Birth:

Gorp was born in a flash of pure, loving, white light on April 12, 1995.

Gorp's Mission:

To help pre-school- and elementary school-aged children understand that they can make the world in which they live, sweeter, and less violent by their own actions toward others. Gorp instills in children the premise proposed by Rabbi Harold Kushner:

“When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world.”

Gorp's Goal:

Gorp teaches children about the importance of living together in a safe, harmonious world, without bullying, teasing, or racial discrimination. ***Gorp's Dream: A Tale of Diversity, Tolerance, and Love in Pumpernickel Park*** builds on the success and momentum of the first book, ***Gorp's Gift***, which teaches children about gun safety without promoting guns, and helps dispel the notion that guns are “cool.” The intent is to empower young children with skills needed to deal effectively with the difficult social situations they face today.

Gorp's Experience:

The Student Pledge Against Gun Violence, Washington, DC 1996 – Present
Due to the combined efforts of creator, Mary Lewis Grow of Northfield MN, Sheila Wellstone, and The Gorp Group, LLC, the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence was implemented, passing through the Senate unanimously with the help of then Senators Bill Bradley and Paul Wellstone. Gorp became part of this effort during the Pledge's formative days and remains so today. To date, the ‘Student Pledge’ has garnered literally millions of pledges from all over the country. It remains an annual event, held in October each year.

Elementary School Systems, US

1997 – Present

Tracy Atwell, a third grade teacher in Ketchum, Idaho, wrote an accompanying Teacher's Guide to ***Gorp's Gift, and Gorp's Dream***, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, creating a complete teaching unit for schools and organizations. With a rich combination of questions, activities, projects, and puzzles, this guide allows caregivers to reinforce Gorp's message in a fun, educational, life-saving way.

School districts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Washington, DC, Richmond, VA, and Chicago, IL, order books and teacher's guides for their elementary schools. Many other school districts follow suit including those in Connecticut, Georgia, Florida, California, Arizona, and Minnesota.

Chicago Police Department, Chicago, IL 1998 - Present
The Chicago Police Department integrates *Gorp's Gift* and Teacher's Guide when working with young children. The Chicago Police Department's Safety Officer reports: *"I go into the classroom with my gun strapped to my hip and I'm immediately challenged and put on the defensive with questions such as why I can carry a gun into school. Now I arrive with the book and after reading it to the kids, the questions are very productive and have to do with their concerns about being safe, which is our objective. Gorp is NOT about gun control, but about teaching children self control."*

Gorp Becomes a Poster Boy, Clarksville, TN 1999 - Present
Gorp became a "poster boy" in Tennessee for the Clarksville-Montgomery County School system. The head of the CMCSS Communications explained: *"Since Gorp is a character that our elementary children are already familiar with, we feel it will help them to feel comfortable calling the safety hotline if they see Gorp on the poster."* His image and verse can be found on posters that include a hotline for students to call to report knowledge of impending violence or fearful situations.

Gorp as a Symbol for Nonviolence, Boston, MA 1999
The Center for Violence Prevention, a project of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, enlarges the cover of *Gorp's Gift*, onto oversized poster board to advertise their "Exchange Toy Guns for a Nonviolent Toy" campaign.

Anti-Violence Organizations Adopt Gorp, US 2000 – Present
Anti-violence groups such as the Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence and the Connecticut Collaborative for Education Against Gun Violence use Gorp materials for community outreach programs. Organizations do charity benefits offering Gorp packages as prizes.

Gorp is featured in *Rio Rancho Journal*, a New Mexico newspaper, advocating legislation to encourage schools across the state to make gun safety education a priority, with Gorp helping to promote the message.

Gorp becomes a video star in San Diego, CA 2001 – Present
Tariq Khamisa's father first established the Tariq Khamisa Foundation, an anti-violence organization, after Tariq, a 19-year old pizza delivery boy, was murdered while working. A 14-year old boy shot him. Tariq's father and the grandfather of the young boy who pulled the trigger, joined forces to teach students about gun violence and respect for

others. *Gorp's Gift* is read in school assemblies and a video of Gorp is used for instructional purposes.

Gorp and the Student Pledge Gains Momentum, U.S. 2001 – Present
The Student Pledge and Day of Concern continue to take place each October in schools across the country. Over three million kids sign the pledge each year promising not to bring guns to school or settle arguments with guns. Gorp's pledges and letters continue to be collected, with future plans for them to be presented to the President of the United States.

Gorp makes the front page of the Norwich, Connecticut, newspaper with the Principal of an elementary school in that city: Gorp is recommended by the Coordinator of the Gun Free School programs for the state of Connecticut, part of the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Gorp's Dream 2002 – Present
The second book in the series, *Gorp's Dream: A Tale of Diversity, Tolerance, and Love in Pumpernickel Park* is launched nationally.

Baby Gorp is Born 2003 – Present
Gorp is now available as a soft plush toy created by designer Lucy Wilson. Children and adults love him!

National Education Association (NEA), Washington, DC 2004 – Present
The National Education Association launches the National Bullying Prevention Campaign and selects *Gorp's Dream* and accompanying *Teacher's Guide* as a tool used by its qualified trainers in elementary school systems around the country to provide effective solutions to help eradicate bullying in America's school systems.

Bio: Sherri Chesson

From her earliest days in her hometown of Duluth, Minnesota, Sherri Chesson has been a champion for children and their causes. As a child, she was involved as a Brownie, a Girl Scout, active in the Community Children's Theatre, and then became a camp counselor. Her interests in children continued into her adult life where she was a teacher on famed TV's *Romper Room*, a mother of six, and a writer of children's books. With most

every cause that she has supported or job that she has taken, her efforts have centered on children.

At the University of Wisconsin, a communications major (and one of the first female cheerleaders), she was afforded her first opportunity to work in television. Here she was the floor manager and voice over for several animal and inanimate object characters on the PBS long running program, 'The Friendly Giant'.

After graduation and marriage, she moved to Phoenix, AZ, where she won the role as teacher on TV's *Romper Room*. Her television career also included a "magazine of the air" show called *Here's Sherri*, which she hosted daily at the NBC affiliate in Phoenix, AZ. Her career continued with the shows *Phoenix After Dark* and then the *Sherri Chesson Show*. Her work garnered her two regional Emmy Awards, one for Best Children's Show and the other for Outstanding Female Personality.

Her professional experience expanded into the world of radio, including *The Best of Broadway* series. Both in radio and television, she had roles in a myriad of commercials and endorsements. During these years, she was also active in community theatre.

When her first book, ***Gorp's Gift*** was published in 1996, Sheila Wellstone, the wife of the late senator of MN, Paul Wellstone, contacted Mary Lewis Grow, who initiated the project, who then got in touch with Sherri. With the help of Senator Paul Wellstone and Senator Bill Bradley, they succeeded in securing a unanimous confirmation from the US Senate denoting a day in October as the Day of Concern and Student Pledge Against Gun Violence. This day has been observed with growing involvement every year since its inception. Nearly 10 million students have signed the pledge not to carry guns to school or to solve problems by using weapons. Gorp, the character, story, and his message, has been an integral part of this program.

Now Gorp and his anti-violence teachings are an integral part of Sherri's life. ***Gorp's Dream***, the next book in the series, helps to instill in children a sense of fairness towards others, an understanding of tolerance and diversity, and a positive, loving lesson in how bullying can not only hurt others, but can cause permanent, heartbreaking damage. ***Gorp's Dream*** is now a part of the National Bullying Awareness Campaign, established by the National Education Association.

Now, Ms. Chesson and Gorp have created *Gorp's Secret*, which teaches children to keep themselves safe from abuse and inappropriate touching. With the love and caring Gorp has displayed in every book, he tackles the problem in ways that are empowering not frightening to children of all ages.

Gorp is dedicated to helping make our children's world a better one, as is Ms. Chesson.