

## CLARENDON HILLS



## Engineering author builds on children's natural play

A toddler's fascination with building blocks is the simplest form of engineering, according to children's book author Lee Sullivan Hill of Clarendon Hills. She has published nine non-fiction early readers about "engineering and real life" since her first book, "Bridges Connect," was released in December 1996.

Hill wore a hard hat as a construction engineer for seven years and, aside from keeping a journal, never considered a career in writing until she had children.

After a few years of "being at home with the kids and losing my mind a little," Hill said, she came up with the idea of combining photos with simple text to explain the basic principles of engineering for the "absorbent"

John Baker, (top, left) is among the students the students listening to stories told by children's author Lee Sullivan Hill (above).

Tribune photos by Ed Wagner

minds of young readers.

"Curiosity about how the world works begins quite early. Playing with food is a form of engineering, so is playing with blocks and even manipulating the pages of a book," said Hill, whose early elementary readers are bought primarily by libraries and schools for instructional purposes.

Eight more titles for Hill's "Building Block Books" series have been published by Carolhoda Books, a division of the Lerner Group since "Bridges Connect."

In April, "Schools Help Us Learn" and "Libraries Take Us Far" were released and she has

been writing a book a month to keep up with her publisher's appetite for yet a second series called "Get Around Books" about transportation.

Despite her editor's enthusiasm for her ability to write colorful text to explain sometimes difficult concepts, Hill had to hard-sell the idea for a title on tunnels.

Hill makes a dozen or so school and Cub Scout troop visits in the suburbs each year and even though she is a mother of two boys, she said construction engineering is not just for the guys.

Jane Burek