

Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF)

Nurturing a love of reading and writing among children throughout New Hampshire and Vermont



CLiF to 'Adopt' Three Rural Northern Towns for Three Years



Delighted young readers at a CLiF event in Lunenburg, VT in 2007.

CLiF is undertaking an exciting new initiative! Thanks to a generous grant from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund, we will create a comprehensive program to promote literacy among children from birth to age 12 in three rural northern communities. Our Community Literacy Award will enable local children and their families to participate in many CLiF programs for three consecutive years. CLiF will also weave in local initiatives and efforts to generate excitement about reading and writing among all children being served, and we will measure the impact of our work.

From May 2011 through August 2014, CLiF will 'adopt' three rural northern towns: **Colebrook, NH; Stratford NH;** and **Lunenburg, VT.** Each of these communities will receive, at no charge, approximately \$50,000 in literacy programs and services over the three-year

period—up to six CLiF programs per year. The finalists were chosen based on the enthusiasm for the project, the level of local need, and the commitment and collaboration expressed by local organizations. Communities that applied but were not selected were each given a grant of \$500 in new books for local children.

Each selected town will form an advisory group that will pull in ideas and support from many local organizations, businesses, and individuals to help children and their families enjoy the magic and power of books. Most of the activities will involve existing CLiF programs which will be offered in local schools, libraries, early childhood programs, affordable housing, and summer programs. In addition, communities will try out creative and new ideas to bring literacy programs to farmers' markets, doctor's offices, and other settings visited by children and families on a regular basis.

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"CLiF will learn a great deal," says Executive Director Duncan McDougall. "I'm sure we'll come out of this with several creative new initiatives that we'll be able to offer to communities across Vermont and New Hampshire." Throughout the three-year project, CLiF will be working with a team of professional evaluators to measure the impact of this project, and identify new effective methods to build a love of literacy throughout a community. We'll report back to our supporters with regular updates on our progress!

CLiF Fills the Gap

Life is challenging enough for low-income and at-risk families, but in difficult economic times like these it gets particularly rough. CLiF's Program Coordinator Suzanne Loring sees the change in the number of calls, e-mails, and applications she receives: "I've noticed a significant increase in the need for CLiF's services from programs across the board, including schools, shelters, and those serving newborns. They work hard to bring books and literacy into the lives of children but these days they just don't have the resources they need." Here are some examples:

- Many schools and libraries have had budgets frozen or cut as towns scramble to pay the bills with decreasing revenues.
- Head Start programs have lost much of the federal funding that previously allowed them to purchase books for low-income families.
- Low-income housing developments have eliminated the staff and funding required to offer valuable on-site activities for residents.
- Prisons are at full capacity and are focused more on basic operations than programming. (An educator at a large Twin State prison told us CLiF is the only organization that provides family literacy services in her facility.)

Thanks to your loyal and generous support, CLiF helps fill these critical gaps by providing inspiring author visits, writing workshops, literacy seminars, storytelling, and many thousands of inspiring new children's books directly into the hands of the children who need them the most. Our 16 free programs have already touched the lives of more than 100,000 young readers and writers.

We couldn't do it without your support. Please come visit our office or join us at an upcoming CLiF presentation. *We'd love to see you!*


Duncan McDougall
CLiF Executive Director



And then what happened? Duncan spinning tales in front of a wall of new CLiF books.

Connect with CLiF Online



Are you on Facebook?
Please 'Like'
our Page
at facebook.com/cliforg.

Do you Tweet?
Then please follow
us @cliforg
We'd love to stay in touch!



Who's Who

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Summer Readers

For the 6th summer in a row, CLiF is partnering with various **community food programs and summer camps** across NH and VT to bring reading to low-income children. At each event we perform stories, talk about the power of reading, and let each child select two brand-new children's books to take home and keep. These events are free! Call 802.244.0944 or email Suzanne@clifonline.org to recommend a program or camp CLiF should serve.

“Spirited Visit” with Refugee Readers



Refugee children laughing with Duncan during his storytelling presentation.

Thirty children swept into their school’s library, laughing and calling out to friends. Just an average Vermont school scene, except for the languages being spoken—Nepali, Swahili, Russian, Mai Mai—and the beautiful head scarves worn by many of the girls.

The children were ELL students (English Language Learners) at the Hunt Middle School in Burlington, VT. Most were recently arrived

refugees, among more than 10,000 who have resettled in Vermont and New Hampshire over the past decade.

The morning’s guest speaker was CLiF’s Duncan McDougall. Duncan began volunteering with refugees 25 years ago, and he was able to tailor his presentation and storytelling to the audience. He also used many of the new books he brought with him as springboards for discussion. Soon the room was full of questions, stories, and laughter. Many of these children own few books at home, and they were incredulous when they heard they could select any two new books to keep.

Later, ELL teacher Nancy Nadel wrote to Duncan: *“Thank you for your spirited visit. The wiggliest boys in the audience were the ones who sat very still in my classroom reading some of the books over and over.”* Nancy’s annual book budget is \$150 for all her ELL readers, and she was delighted to receive more than \$1,000 in new CLiF books to be used in her class in coming years. *“I am personally grateful that I have many books to teach from that I’ve wanted for years.”* CLiF thanks the Turrell Fund for its generous support of CLiF’s 2010 Vermont refugee events.

Marek Bennett, Comics Creator

Marek Bennett grew up drawing comics. As an adult he has turned his love of this art into a career, drawing comic strips for local papers, creating graphic novels, and sharing his love of comic creation with school children all across the globe. As a Writer-in-Residence presenter for CLiF, Marek has visited many schools in southern New Hampshire with great success.

After a recent workshop with Marek at her school, one of the teachers said, *“The kids were attentive and excited. I could tell that many, many of the kids worked on their projects on their own (home) time, not just at school—so I think that means they were pretty excited about the projects. They were definitely very engaged.”*

A trained K-8 teacher, Marek enjoys working with students of all ages and giving them a way to express themselves using comics as their tool. Traveling from classroom to classroom doing workshops he has oftentimes seen that one child sitting off to the side with no one expecting the student to do anything. *“When it is time to share what has been created, I love to see the surprise in the teacher’s eyes and*



CLiF Writer-in-Residence Marek Bennett working with children in Lemster, NH (pop. 1,090).

the other students’ eyes when suddenly this withdrawn student has so much to say and show,” said Marek. *“In these cases, cartooning has helped change the perspectives of the people around them and how people see them.”*

Marek’s best advice, *“Put aside that little voice that says, ‘I can’t draw.’ Don’t worry if it is good or bad, just get your readers to understand your point. That is what is important.”*

For more information about Marek and his work, visit www.marekbennett.com.

CLiF and Leadership Champlain

Leadership Champlain is a team-based, active learning program sponsored by the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce. Participants in the 10-month program gain insight into community issues and work on a community project for an area nonprofit. Dozens of nonprofits applied for this service and CLiF was selected as one of only six to receive volunteer time and expertise from a Leadership Champlain team over the winter and spring of 2010-2011.

Our team included six business leaders who work in fields as diverse as higher education, insurance, law enforcement, project management, and personal coaching. The group, which dubbed itself “The CLiF Hangers,” created an action plan for how CLiF can use social media tools like Twitter, Facebook, and email marketing to increase and improve CLiF’s brand awareness. Their proposal, which was presented to CLiF staff on April 26, includes best practices, case studies, and concrete steps CLiF can act on right now—and over the year to come. CLiF thanks this group for helping us achieve the goal of increasing engagement with the community in our work!

CLiF Enlivens a Free Community Dinner

There's no doubt about it, times remain tough for many of the families CLiF serves. *"We've seen a huge growth in demand for our free community dinners,"* reports Ray Pecor, Food Program Coordinator for LISTEN Community Services in Lebanon, NH. *"In the past year alone attendance at our dinners grew 35%, and we now feed 1,200 to 1,400 people every month. In many cases people attend our meals so they can still afford their heat or rent."*

Through a partnership with the Hanover Rotary Club and LISTEN, CLiF recently held a special storytelling and book donation event at a community dinner at the Sacred Heart Church in Lebanon, NH.

It's impossible to compete with the scent of freshly baked rolls, and a home-cooked dinner, so we didn't try! When dinner was done CLiF's Duncan McDougall talked about books, read a few stories



Children's Librarian Amy Lappin helping a young reader select a book.

© Jon Gilbert Fox

aloud to an appreciative audience, and then he and several Rotarians helped more than 30 children, parents, and grandparents search through a mountain of gorgeous new books to select just the right volumes to take home.

CLiF always strives to maintain enthusiasm for literacy among local children after we've served a community. In Lebanon, we contacted Amy Lappin, children's

librarian at the Lebanon Public Library. In the months following this CLiF event Amy has volunteered her time to visit one of LISTEN's local community dinners on a regular basis to tell stories and give away new CLiF books. *"It has been a terrific experience,"* reported Amy recently. *"The kids have been very responsive to the stories, and so excited to have new books to take home. They hold them over their head like a trophy and shout 'Yahoo!'"* CLiF thanks the Hanover Rotary Club, Amy Lappin, and Ray Pecor for making these important outreach efforts possible.

Our Partnership with VPR and Casella

From May 11 to 21, CLiF's name and story were heard innumerable times by almost 200,000 listeners of Vermont Public Radio. [VPR partnered with CLiF and Casella Waste during its May 2011 pledge drive.](#) For every pledge made by a VPR listener during the drive, Casella donated a new children's book to CLiF to be given to a needy young reader. Explained Brendan Kinney, VPR's VP of development and marketing. *"We know that our listeners value literacy and the important work that CLiF does day-in and day-out for children in the region. It was a powerful equation: One pledge equals one book for one child."*

The equation worked! CLiF will soon receive more than 5,000 new books for our Summer Readers program. *"Casella was very excited to be a part of this wonderful endeavor"* added Stephen McDonnell, Casella director of sales and marketing. *"We believe nothing should be wasted and that every child should have the opportunity to explore their own creativity and pursuit of knowledge to the fullest extent possible. This partnership ensures for a few thousand children that their pursuit is supported."* Many thanks to VPR and Casella Waste for allowing CLiF to serve many more children!

Two Voices from Prison

In December, during a special family holiday event, CLiF presenter Tracey Campbell Pearson visited the women's prison in Swanton, VT, told stories, drew pictures, and let children of inmates select new books to keep:

Women's Prison Staff Member:

"The mothers and children who attended the CLiF event were treated to a delightful storytelling presentation by author and illustrator Tracey Campbell Pearson. They were also able to browse through and select books to read together, which the children could then take home. For children who rarely get to have such 'ordinary' experiences such as listening to a storyteller with their mom, this was a real treat! CLiF also provided books to the Storybook collection, from which moms can choose a book to record and then send home to their children."

CLiF's Duncan McDougall conducted literacy seminars recently with male inmates at the large penitentiary in Berlin, NH. Each inmate was able to select new children's books to read aloud on tape and then send the books and tape home to their children:

Male Inmate: *"My son is autistic. He loves to hear tapes of 'Thomas' and related stories. Mr. McDougall specially presented me with a wonderful collection of Thomas the Tank Engine stories—most of which are new*

to my son and I. My son really enjoyed hearing these stories from this book and we begin each video visit with a 'Thomas' story or three. I know I could not wait to read to my children at the next video visit. Other inmates felt the same way."



Author-illustrator Tracey Campbell Pearson brings one of her characters to life at the Swanton presentation.

A Library Divided in Fairfield, VT

Until recently the Bent Northrop Memorial Library in Fairfield, VT was housed in the elementary school and served the student population and the community. Recently, a new public library was built beside the school, and the public and school librarians worked diligently to divide up the book collection between the two sites. This was when CLiF stepped in to help rebuild the public library's collection by donating \$2,000 worth of brand-new books and to provide a storytelling presentation for all Fairfield's students in grades K-5.

"We are a lucky town!" said Kristen Hughes, public librarian. *"CLiF helped to bring a love of reading to our kids. When people who love books start talking about books they simply ooze enthusiasm! With a new library and this CLiF grant, Fairfield is simply surrounded by great books!"*

On the day of Fairfield's presentation, CLiF's Duncan McDougall spent the morning at the new library telling stories and giving books



No shy members in this young audience in Fairfax, VT (pop. 1,916).

to children from a local childcare center, none of whom would put the books into backpacks because they wanted to hold them all the way home. He then headed to the elementary school for storytelling and the presentation of all the new library books.

"The storytelling presentation was wonderful," said Jennifer Wood, principal of Fairfield Center School. *"Duncan had all of the kids AND the adults hooked from the moment he began. I know that there are a lot of kiddos thinking 'I've got to go and pick up that book when I go to the library.'"*

Basketball, Books, and Banners

UVM's Patrick Gym was filled with basketballs, books, and excited children on April 12th for the culmination of the UPS Store's regional "Hoops for Literacy" event. *Each child who donated a new book was invited to a skills clinic organized by the UVM men's and women's basketball teams.* Throughout the event, players reminded the children that reading and writing are as essential as dribbling and shooting skills for success as a college athlete. CLiF left the event at UVM with hundreds of new books that will be distributed to children in need this spring.

CLiF has been the beneficiary of other recent book drives as well. Customers of

the Barnes and Noble bookstore in South Burlington donated almost 1,000 books between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Other stores that collected books for CLiF during the holidays include: [Bridgeside Bookstore in Waterbury, VT](#); [Better Planet Books, Toys and Hobbies of Bristol and St. Albans, VT](#); and [Alran Books of Harrison, NH](#).

Lastly, CLiF's name and logo will be prominently displayed at more than 200 literacy programs this year thanks to a grant from [Sign-A-Rama of South Burlington](#) giving CLiF 25 large vinyl banners that will go on the road with authors, illustrators, and poets who represent CLiF in schools, libraries, and other settings throughout Vermont and New Hampshire.

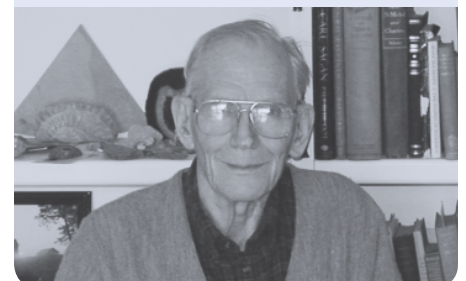
To learn more about organizing a book drive for CLiF at your business, school or organization, contact [Joanne Heidkamp, joanne@clifonline.org](mailto:joanne@clifonline.org). To discuss how your business can support CLiF, contact [Matt Bushlow, matt@clifonline.org](mailto:matt@clifonline.org) or call 802-244-0944.

Recognizing Dr. Ethan Sims for His Bequest

Dr. Ethan Allen Sims felt life would simply not be the same without books. He remembered vividly his father reading Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* aloud. *"My father had such a wonderful way of reading. He read to me regularly until I was 12."*

When Ethan was eight, he loved reading books about famous researchers including Louis Pasteur. These books influenced his decision to pursue a life in medicine.

Dr. Sims became Professor Emeritus at University of Vermont School of Medicine and a celebrated researcher in the field of obesity for 50 years. *When Dr. Sims died recently he left a generous bequest to CLiF so that many other children could experience the love of books and reading. Thank you, Dr. Sims.*



UVM mascot "Rally" and friends show off some of the books gathered by UPS.

Books, Banana Trees, and Buddhist Temples

By Duncan McDougall, Executive Director

In January and February my wife Belle, our 10-year-old son Jesse, and I took a long-awaited family sabbatical to Vietnam and Laos. It was an unforgettable trip.

Before our departure, we learned of a Laotian nonprofit called Big Brother Mouse (BBM) that publishes and distributes books in the Lao language to rural children. Average per capita annual income in Laos is \$986 and only 69% of Laotians are literate. The number of rural children who attend school is increasing, yet many have never read a book other than their school textbooks. We had wanted to perform a service project on our trip, so our family decided to sponsor and attend a BBM book delivery party in a rural Laotian village.

We departed the riverside town of Luang Prabang with four BBM staff members, our van jouncing past banana trees and villagers hauling bundles of firewood on their backs. Eventually we pulled into the packed-dirt courtyard of the Xienglom elementary school.

The morning we spent in Xienglom reminded me of a CLiF event: the rural school; a large group of excited children; lively, interactive discussions about books and reading; a storyteller spinning tall tales; the piles of beautiful new books.

But much was strikingly different: the scent of incense wafting from a nearby Buddhist temple; the school yard sprinkled with mangy dogs; children sitting four to a bench under posters explaining how stepping barefoot in feces can give you worms.



Children sharing their new books in Xienglom, Laos.

At last, the children lined up, hopping with excitement at the prospect of selecting their very first book, a difficult task from among 15 titles. But soon everyone had chosen, and the kids scattered around the courtyard, mouthing written words to themselves, or proudly showing friends their new treasure. Despite the exotic setting, some things really are universal.

More info? www.bigbrothermouse.com

CLiF Welcomes Matt Bushlow and Julia Levine!

CLiF is reaching more children at more events each year. To keep things running smoothly, we're being joined this spring by two new team members.

Matt Bushlow is CLiF's new communication and development coordinator.

He'll be responsible for getting news about CLiF's work out to our supporters, potential supporters, and clients via news articles, our website, Facebook page, and Twitter account. Matt will also be reaching out to the business community for support. Matt grew up in Thetford, Vermont, and says he was "a book kid. I was immersed in the stories of Babar, Tintin, and the Hardy Boys. I can't wait to help kids across Vermont and New Hampshire experience that moment of excitement when they get hooked on a new book." Matt served in the Peace Corps



in Cape Verde, and now lives in Burlington with his partner, Anna.

Julia Levine is stepping into the newly created position of CLiF office manager. We're excited about her proficiency in database management and office administration, but we

are also intrigued by her previous experience in literacy, which includes translating fairy tales into Swahili in Tanzania, and bringing books to children in rural Lao villages. As a child, Julia loved Hans Christian Andersen stories, and also sought out books about natural disasters, paranormal activity, and great white sharks. In addition to her work at CLiF, Julia runs a small business that helps high school and college students plan "gap year" trips abroad. Julia now lives in Stowe with her fiancé, Tom, and their dog Sylvester.

How Will You Be Remembered?

Everyone hopes to leave a positive mark on the world.

At CLiF, we do everything we can to open the doors of imagination and opportunity through literacy. If you share our desire to inspire the next generation of young readers and writers, please support CLiF through a **bequest** or **planned gift**. You'll allow CLiF to continue "Opening Books, Opening Minds, Opening Doors" for thousands of children for decades to come. Please let us know if you've included CLiF in your planned giving so we can share our thanks. For more information contact Duncan at clif@clifonline.org or 802-244-0944.

Thank you!

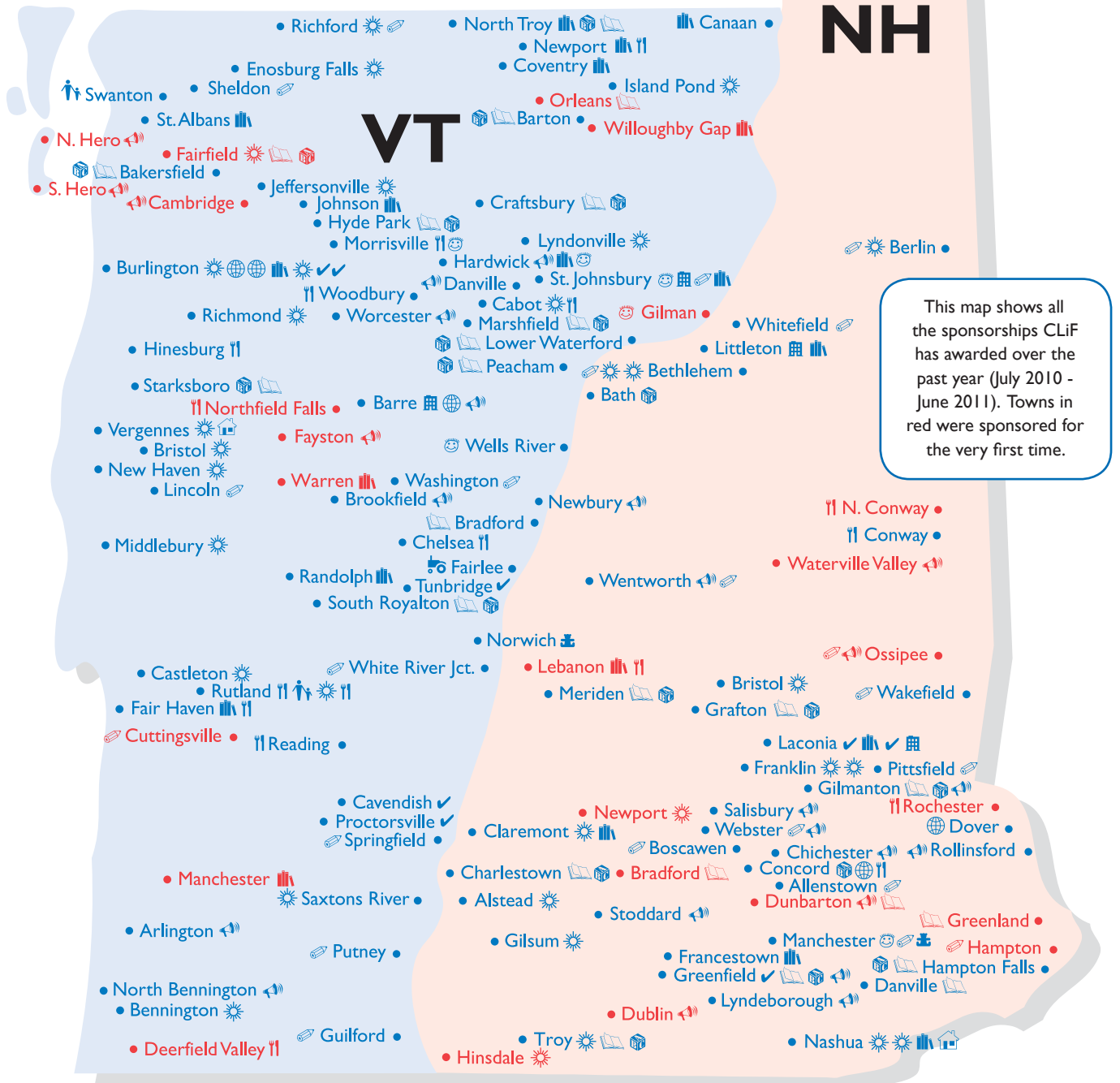
CLiF Sponsorships (July 2010 - June 2011)

Since 1998 CLiF has touched the lives of more than 100,000 children in almost 400 towns across New Hampshire and Vermont. CLiF provides sponsorships to rural public libraries as well as to children served by homeless shelters, women's shelters, low-income housing, and bookmobiles. CLiF works with children's book authors and illustrators to provide presentations to children in rural areas. We send writers-in-residence to elementary schools, award Rainy Day sponsorships to towns facing severe economic challenges, and provide new books and literacy support to children of prison inmates, migrant children, refugee children, children in poverty, Head Start children, children in childcare, families with newborns, and families visiting food shelves.

Legend

Towns CLiF is serving for the very first time are listed in red.

	Rural Public Libraries		Children of Prison Inmates		Head Start
	Author / Illustrator Visits		Migrant Children		Childcare
	Writer-in-Residence		Families with Newborns		Food Shelves
	Shelters		Bookmobiles		CLiF Choice
	Refugee Children		Rainy Day Sponsorships		Book Give-away
	Summer Readers		Low-Income Housing		



This map shows all the sponsorships CLiF has awarded over the past year (July 2010 - June 2011). Towns in red were sponsored for the very first time.



Children's Literacy Foundation
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

When you're done,
please share this
newsletter with a friend!

Note from a young CLiF reader

Think you for the books,
we all love the books,
I go to the library after
school every Tuesday and
Thursday I can't wait to
read the new books!

An attentive young audience at a recent CLiF event.

