

Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF)

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



That's a Lot of Children!



If 100,000 children were placed head to toe, they would stretch 75 miles. Stacked one on top of another, they would be 64 times taller than Mt. Washington. *That's a lot of kids!*

We're proud (and somewhat astonished) to note that, as of July 2010, CLiF's literacy programs have reached and inspired more than 100,000 low-income, at-risk, and rural young readers and writers in almost 400 communities across New Hampshire and Vermont.

When Duncan McDougall founded CLiF in 1998 the organization operated one program (Rural Public Libraries), served 500 children in six communities, and donated \$6,600 in new books in its first year. Duncan served as CLiF's volunteer Executive Director and sole staff member, and he gave all the presentations.

We've come a long way! CLiF's five paid staff members now operate 16 free programs that serve more than 17,000 children in more than 150 communities annually. This year we'll give away almost \$175,000 in new books. Duncan still gives presentations, but many more

are given by dozens of local, professional authors, illustrators, poets, and storytellers.

We've expanded from our initial focus on rural children. CLiF now also supports children in homeless shelters, low-income housing, and mobile home parks, as well as refugee children, migrant children, children of prison inmates, foster children, children visiting food shelves, low-income families with newborns, and *many* others.

This tremendous growth has surprised even our founders. Sonja Hakala, a founding (and current) CLiF Director, commented: *"Did I ever imagine we would have so many programs? Prisons? Homeless shelters? Immigrant children? Author and illustrator programs? No, I didn't. But I think all these programs are different incarnations of our original idea—to take literacy to places where it really makes a difference in the lives of children in Vermont and New Hampshire."* CLiF founder, former staff member, and current Advisor Mary Catherine Jones said: *"I find myself slightly in awe of what CLiF has been able to accomplish in this short time. What will we do when that number is one million? Perhaps we'll have to write a children's book about it."* Maybe we will!

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We Ask Just Once

Unlike many non-profits, CLiF sends only one appeal letter each year.

Our letter and Annual Report were mailed in early November. *If you've made a gift to CLiF, our deepest gratitude. If not, please consider a year-end donation to support our work.* You can use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.clifonline.org. Thanks!

Director's Letter

Since 1998 CLiF has served more than 100,000 low-income, rural, and at-risk children, and we'll support yet another 17,000 in 2011. I thought you'd enjoy hearing a few of their young voices:

"You mean I can take this home?" 2nd grade boy at a Rural Library presentation as he received his first library card and checked out a new CLiF book

"Can I have your autograph? I want to be a writer too!" Young girl to author Natalie Kinsey-Warnock after an Author/Illustrator visit

"I was the dude who knew nothing about poetry, but now I'm the poet that won't put his pencil down." 5th grade boy after a three-day Writer-in-Residence program

"I liked the stories you read to the class. I liked all the books that you brought. You make me really use my imagination!" Note from a 6th grade girl after a Rural Library event

"We don't have books at home anymore." 3rd grade boy at a Summer Readers event as he eagerly selected two new books to keep

These children, and tens of thousands of others in almost 400 towns across New Hampshire and Vermont, have been inspired thanks to your generous support of CLiF and our 16 programs. If you've not made a gift to CLiF yet this year, please use the enclosed envelope or make a secure donation at www.clifonline.org. You'll help us touch many more young lives. *Thanks!*


Duncan McDougall
CLiF Executive Director



Duncan spinning tales in a park in the northern mill town of Berlin, NH

Connect with CLiF Online



Did you know Facebook is the third largest "country" in the world, with over 500 million active users?

Did you know Twitter sees 90 million tweets each day?



CLiF has jumped into the social media realm to better connect with friends, supporters, nonprofits, businesses, and anyone interested in our work. **We have almost 300 people who 'Like' us on Facebook, and more than 550 followers on Twitter.** We post and tweet about CLiF events, new literacy studies, children's book authors and illustrators, and more.

These sites also help friends give us feedback or share their favorite children's books.

Join in the conversation! Visit www.facebook.com/cliforg (you need to sign up for an account if you don't have one) and www.twitter.com/cliforg (no account needed).

Who's Who

CLiF News Staff:

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CLiF Staff:

Duncan McDougall • *Executive Director*
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Joanne Heidkamp • *Special Projects Coord.*
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A Meaningful Holiday Gift

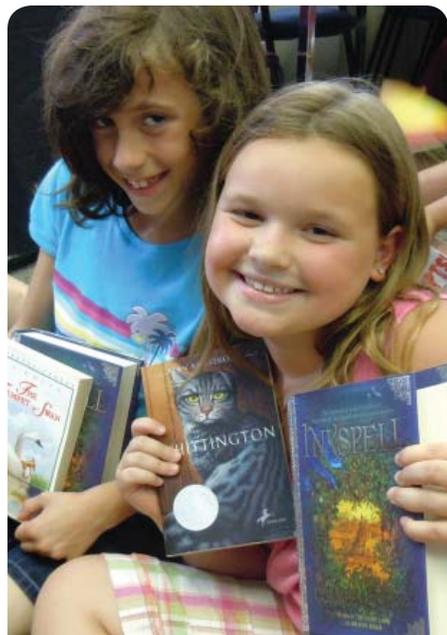
If you're looking for a meaningful gift for a special person, or if you'd like to honor the memory of a loved one, **why not make a donation to CLiF in that person's name?** Your thoughtful gesture will be appreciated, and will help us touch many young lives.

We'll send a special packet to the individual(s) of your choice or their family informing them of the gift in their name (without noting the amount) and including information about CLiF and our programs.

To make an honorary or memorial gift, send a check and the name and address of the person you would like to honor to: CLiF, 1536 Loomis Hill Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677, or donate by visiting our secure website at www.clifonline.org

Sliding Through Summer

Did you know that unless students read regularly during the summer, they fall behind about three months in their reading achievement? According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, kids who read at least four books over the summer maintain or even *increase* their skills.



Happy participants after a Summer Readers event in Nashua, NH

For the past five summers, CLiF has reached out to summer programs to ensure children in New Hampshire and Vermont have books to read during vacation. At each Summer Readers event CLiF provides a fun, interactive storytelling presentation and then each child can choose two brand-new children's books to take home and keep.

This year CLiF worked with five different presenters, visited 31 sites, and served almost 2,000 children – a 30% increase over last year!

“Whether a book is shyly or hungrily received we can see the children’s response is one of wonder and appreciation,” said Martha Burns, who organized a CLiF Summer Readers event in Fairfield, VT (pop. 1,800) in July, 2010. *“The selection of books was perfect in interests covered and age range too! We thank you again for such a giving, valuable program.”*

For more information about CLiF’s Summer Readers program or to recommend a site for next summer, please contact Suzanne at Suzanne@clifonline.org.

Evaluation Keeps CLiF Focused on Effectiveness

CLiF strives to offer programs that have the greatest positive impact on the children and organizations we serve. *One way we achieve this goal is to conduct follow-up phone interviews with librarians, educators, and youth program staff after their organizations have received sponsorships.* These individuals tell us about their sponsorship experience and share recommendations, and we use this information to strengthen our programs.

We learn what is successful and what needs to be modified. We also hear about new opportunities for reaching at-risk children, and hear about the impact of CLiF’s work. Here are two recent quotes:

“The children were so engaged at the presentation! All week we’ve had older brothers and sisters who weren’t at the CLiF event coming into the library asking where the new books are. A lot of parents have come in too. The books are going like hotcakes!” — **Rural Librarian**

“Children kept coming up to me in the hallway after the assembly and saying: ‘Thank you so much for bringing (author and illustrator) Erick Ingraham to our school!’ ”
— **Elementary School Teacher**

CLiF Conference “Absolutely Awesome”

Ninety librarians, trustees, and volunteers from 65 communities across Vermont and New Hampshire shared success stories and absorbed new ideas at the **7th CLiF Rural Library Conference in White River Junction, VT on September 19**. This popular event was sold out for the third year in a row.

Animated discussion followed panelist presentations on topics including collaborating with local schools, serving older children, and fundraising. A recurring theme throughout the day was the opportunities and challenges presented by new technologies such as electronic readers, internet access, and using social media to promote the library.

Many thanks to master storyteller **Simon Brooks**, who donated a storytelling event that was raffled off among those who made donations to CLiF. The lucky winner was the Davis Library in Stoddard, NH (pop. 1,047). Additional thanks go to the **Donley Foundation** for its continued support of this annual event. It was an energizing, stimulating day. Said one departing attendee: *“This was my first CLiF conference, and it was absolutely awesome. I enjoyed every minute of it, and I learned and shared a great deal!”*



A librarian sharing ideas with her colleagues at the CLiF Rural Library Conference

Christmas Comes Early to Center Sandwich, NH

Students at the Center Sandwich School wore tall striped hats for a joint celebration of two literacy milestones: the birthday of Dr. Seuss, and CLiF's delivery of \$2,000 in brand-new children's books to the Wentworth Library in Center Sandwich, NH. The books were arrayed on tables in the school auditorium as



Students checking out books after the CLiF presentation in Center Sandwich, NH (pop. 1,407)

storyteller Duncan McDougall provided an animated glimpse of some of the stories inside the new books. *"I wish you could have heard the oohs and ahhs when the children realized that all these new books would be staying in town for them to use,"* said librarian Bethany Powers.

Center Sandwich is a close-knit town of 1,400 in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire at the foot of the White Mountains. In recent years the number of early elementary students has increased. In her application to CLiF, Powers wrote: *"These learning readers are voracious with their new-found ability to read, and they make their way quickly through our limited collection."*

As the celebration drew to a close, students perused the books and checked them out from library staff and volunteers. Soon the gym was filled with clusters of children showing off their selections to one another. *"As a small library with a tight budget, every choice I make with our dollars is critical,"* said Powers. *"It was like Christmas, getting these books."* Commented one 5th grade girl after the CLiF event, *"I was having a really bad day, but now it's good!"*

Providing Innovative Programs with New Books

This year CLiF started yet another new initiative. We now donate collections of new books to innovative New Hampshire and Vermont-based children's programs to hand out to the kids they serve. Since January, CLiF has donated \$20,000 in brand-new children's books to various programs across the two states.

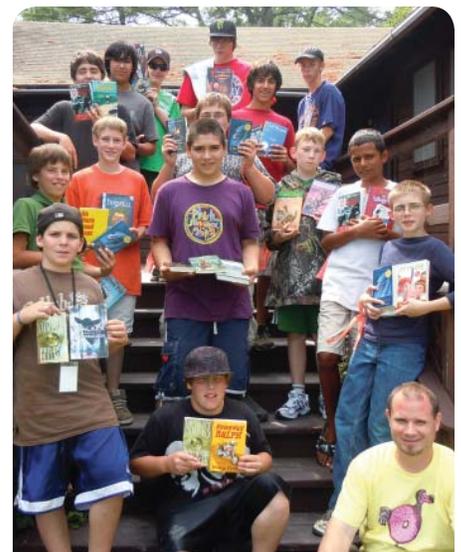
We support initiatives ranging from Little Hands to Hold, a nonprofit that supports foster children, to a Girl Scout creating bags filled with books for children in a shelter, to a Vermont farmstand where each visiting child leaves with vegetables and a new book.

Bernadette Bessette, an educator with the University of Vermont Extension Program, said this of CLiF's donation to the kids in her nutrition camp this past summer: *"All of your hard work is greatly appreciated by the children and families who received these books. I wished you all could have seen the smiles and heard the expressions of delight and gratitude."*

CLiF is a Well-Loved Tradition at CAMP!

For the 7th summer in a row, CLiF partnered with CAMP! (Camp Exclamation Point), a nonprofit that provides a free week of summer camp to kids with limited opportunities, including children of migrant families from Vermont and New Hampshire. Some of these children have parents who earn a living on dairy farms, planting, picking, and generally going where they can to earn money. Such children can experience rural isolation, poverty, and disruption of education due to frequent moves.

Every summer CLiF: 1) provides an on-site library of new children's books for campers and counselors; 2) conducts stimulating book talks with all campers; 3) allows each camper to select two new books to keep from a wide-ranging collection; and 4) organizes an evening of stories by professional storytellers Simon Brooks, Matt Witten, and CLiF's Duncan McDougall. This event has been called *"one of the high points of the week, and a well-loved tradition with both campers and staff!"* CLiF is delighted to be part of this summer tradition.



Displaying their selections at CAMP!

Children Continue Their Mother's Legacy

Miriam Wise Saunders was born and raised in St. Albans, VT. She loved the natural world, all things Vermont, and reading. Mrs. Saunders supported CLiF's literacy work through the Vermont Community Foundation, and when she passed away, her children chose to continue that tradition. Mrs. Saunders' son Will, a retired minister in Portland, ME, noted that his mother *"tended to think long term, and she recognized that literacy and the ability to use the written and spoken word were critical skills for human beings to be successful in the world. We wanted to continue supporting the things she believed in,"* he said.

The Saunders-Wise family—Rev. Saunders, along with his two sisters, Martha Nabatian of Ottawa and Carolyn

Munger of Burlington, VT—has sponsored three Vermont libraries in Middletown Springs, Rochester, and Orwell, VT, as well as CLiF's Summer Readers program. Will attended the three library sponsorships his family funded.

Rev. Saunders noted that one of things he most appreciates about CLiF is that *"it's direct service."* He also remarked on the joy of *"seeing the faces of the children when they are hearing a story, or seeing them wide-eyed looking at a book."*

Many thanks to this family that honors their mother's love of reading and Vermont with their ongoing support of CLiF's efforts to nurture a love of reading and writing among children.



Rev. Will Saunders (at back) with children at the childcare presentation in Orwell, VT (pop. 1,200)

Mrs. Morgan's Gift to the Next Generation

Mrs. Genevieve Rusterholz Morgan of Essex, VT, cared about children. In recent years **she took the time to include CLiF in her will.** When Mrs. Morgan died last year at 96, CLiF received a generous bequest that will allow us to provide our programs to more than 1,500 children. *Thank you Mrs. Morgan!*

Eight other individuals and couples (see *CLiF FY2010 Annual Report*) have also shown their desire to inspire the next generation of readers and writers by recognizing CLiF in a **bequest** or **planned gift.** We hope you will join them! Your gesture will allow CLiF to continue "Opening Books, Opening Minds, Opening Doors" for thousands of children for decades to come. For more information contact Duncan at 802.244.0944 or clif@clifonline.org. **Thanks!**

Encouraging Growing Readers

CLiF's Childcare Program runs hand-in-hand with our Rural Library Sponsorships and aims to build relationships between libraries and local childcare centers, preschools, or at-home daycares. **Since it began in 2008, the program has grown in popularity, with 85% of the libraries now participating versus 50% when it was initiated.**

When a library receives a CLiF sponsorship can nominate a local childcare group with which it would like to build a relationship. The nominated childcare program then receives a visit from CLiF on the same day we hold the library's event. Childcares receive a storytelling presentation and a collection of new books for their program. Each child can also choose two brand-new children's books to keep.

"Being able to arrange a presentation at the local childcare center was the best part of the grant," said librarian Amy McMullen from Hartland, VT. *"I've known about the center, and they have brought children to preschool story time, but this has helped us forge a closer relationship. I'm now planning to go there twice a month."*

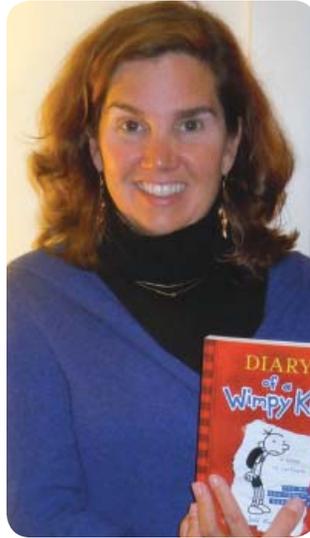


Children's book author Sy Montgomery captivating a young audience in Andover, NH (pop. 2,210)

CLiF Welcomes Two New Directors

CLiF is delighted to welcome two new members to our Board of Directors!

Jennifer Williams lives in Norwich, VT with her husband Stan and their three children. She is a joint venture partner with Norwich Partners, which buys and builds hotels, and Executive Director of the Children's Fund of the Upper Valley.



Jenny, why does CLiF's mission draw you? It's critical to invest in children who may be at risk due to economic/social circumstances beyond their control. There's something magical about getting kids excited about reading – it's something every kid CAN do, if they have access to books.

Why did you join CLiF's board? As a (small) funder, I've looked at CLiF's financials and been incredibly impressed by how lean an organization it is. And Duncan is one of the most passionate and talented executive directors I've met.

What did you read as a child? I read a wide range: Nancy Drew, Little Women, and From the Mixed-Up Files of Basil E. Frankweiler... I grew up with four brothers, so it's no surprise all these books have strong female characters!



Bill Tine worked in publishing for years, and is currently director of business development for King Arthur Flour. He lives in Norwich, VT with his wife, Michele, and infant daughter, Lily Grace.

Bill, why did you join CLiF? First and foremost it's the dedication to helping improve children's literacy. I'm also inspired by CLiF's successful track record and incredible coverage in both VT and NH.

What books from your childhood do you hope Lily will read someday? I actually wasn't a kid who would regularly be found reading and I didn't look forward to many school-assigned readings. But some books I read over and over, like Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH, and Where the Red Fern Grows.

What are you and Lily reading these days? Fifteen Animals by Sandra Boynton has been a favorite for awhile.

Giving Children a Passport to Read

A recent three-year study by the US Department of Education underscored the power of letting children decide what *they* want to read. **Researchers tracked the reading habits and test scores of 1,300 low-income children. Those who selected several new books from 600 diverse titles at a book fair each spring experienced the same positive impacts as those who had attended summer school.**

That's no great surprise to CLiF. For 12 years we've helped more than 100,000 disadvantaged children select new books that match their unique interests. We know the very act of reading expands a child's language skills, vocabulary,

imagination, and attention span. **We also know the more kids read, the more kids want to keep reading, and the amount of time children spend reading for fun is a strong predictor of success in school.**

Many of the children CLiF serves are not avid readers. Some don't even have a single book at home. But virtually every child at our events rushes up to choose the books that call to them. Whether they pick *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, or a biography of the latest teen idol, it all helps. **By giving children a passport to read (and a library card!) who knows how far they'll go?**





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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Have you made a year-end
gift to CLiF yet?
If not, we hope to hear
from you!

Note from a young CLiF reader

I love to read, but mostly I read in
bed ~~at night~~ at night. Then when I go to bed
to sleep I emagen what is in the story

*Girls selecting new books at a
CLiF event for foster children*

