

Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF)

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



## CLiF's Community Literacy Awards Off to a Great Start



*CLiF storyteller Simon Brooks reeling in his listeners at the Community Literacy Award kick-off event in Stratford, NH (pop. 746)*

Everyone at CLiF is thrilled that **Colebrook** and **Stratford, NH** and **Lunenburg, VT** started the new school year in an exciting way — with celebrations of books and reading! Each community hosted CLiF storytelling presentations, book giveaways, and sign-ups for free children's magazine subscriptions from Carus Publishing. *These events were all part of a kick-off for CLiF's three-year Community Literacy Awards.* CLiF has "adopted" each of these economically challenged rural communities and is collaborating with them to develop a comprehensive, multi-year approach to promoting children's literacy.

Thanks to support from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund, each community will receive \$50,000 in literacy support over three years. *Each town will host up to six of CLiF's existing programs per year. They will be offered in local schools, libraries, early childhood programs, affordable housing, and summer programs.*

*But that's not all: Each community has formed an advisory group that will draw additional ideas and participation from many local organizations, businesses, and individuals.* The groups will use that local knowledge to create new initiatives to bring literacy programs to farmers markets, doctor's offices, and other settings frequented by children and families.

All three towns have also created names for their projects. Stratford's is "North Star," an acronym for North Stratford Adventures in Reading. At their kick-off event, CLiF presenter Simon Brooks entertained kids and their families with stories. Each child selected two brand-new books to keep, and also signed up for a free subscription to *Cricket*, *Ladybug*, *Babybug* or another award-winning magazine for children.

Becky Hodge is the coordinator of "Colebrook Reads." After their kick-off event, she said: *"We're making great progress*

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*building bridges all around town, between the public library, the elementary school, Head Start, local child care programs and preschools. Thanks to this grant, I'm feeling really hopeful about making some lasting changes over the next three years."*

Lunenburg (and neighboring Gilman) has named their project "ROAR," for Reaching Our Awesome Readers. In addition to the three kick-off events that attracted 75% of local children and their parents, activities planned for this school year include a Halloween visit from storyteller Simon Brooks, a presentation by

*continued on page 3*

# CLiF's (R)evolution

It is tremendously exciting to watch CLiF mature into a non-profit with considerably greater capacity to take on complex projects that have a significantly larger impact on the low-income, at-risk, and rural children and families we serve. Some days the changes feel like a steady, positive evolution. Some days, like a revolution!

During the last six months alone we:

- Initiated a \$250,000, three-year community literacy project that will allow us to have a measurable positive impact on the lives of all children from birth to age 12 in three economically-challenged northern communities (see article on P. 1).
- Began working with a professional educational research organization to measure the impact of CLiF's programs on young readers and writers.
- Hired two excellent new employees (Julia Rogers and Matt Bushlow), and reorganized our office, computer system, donation library, and staff responsibilities.
- Completed a successful partnership with Vermont Public Radio and Casella Waste that increased awareness of CLiF's programs and provided 6,500 beautiful new children's books to give away to CLiF readers.
- Improved and expanded many of our existing 16 free literacy programs.
- Organized an effort to provide new books and other literacy support to children and families affected by Hurricane Irene's devastating flooding in Vermont, and helped lead a creative literacy initiative that will raise funds to help rebuild our hard-hit hometown of Waterbury (more details soon!).

Thank you for allowing us to serve so many deserving children. Our supporters have enabled us to touch the lives of more than 120,000 young readers and writers in almost 400 communities across New Hampshire and Vermont. Sounds like a literacy revolution to me!

  
Duncan McDougall  
CLiF Executive Director



Duncan mesmerizing another young audience

## Help CLiF Find Programs to Sponsor

**Do you know a program or organization in New Hampshire or Vermont that serves low-income or at-risk children from birth to age 12?**

Please let their staff know it's easy to apply to CLiF to receive at no cost: 1) an engaging storytelling presentation; 2) an opportunity for each child to select two new, high-quality books to keep; and 3) a library of new children's books that will remain on-site.

Eligible organizations include affordable housing, family shelters, parent education programs, Head Start, community centers, and refugee services.

For more information, contact Suzanne Loring at [Suzanne@clifonline.org](mailto:Suzanne@clifonline.org).

## Who's Who

### CLiF News Staff:

Matt Bushlow      Suzanne Loring  
Joanne Heidkamp      Duncan McDougall  
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Matt Bushlow • *Comm. / Develop. Coord.*  
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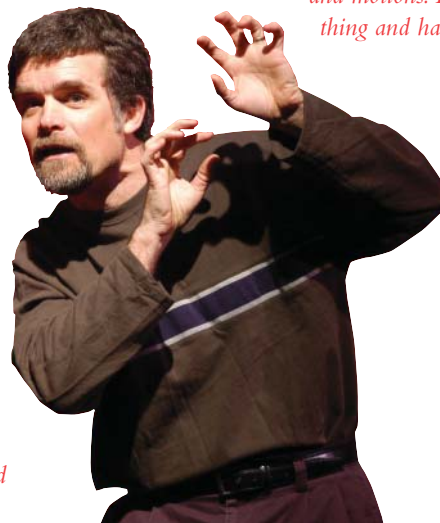


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We'd love to stay in touch!

# Poetry in Motion — CLiF Presenter Marv Klassen-Landis

In his earliest memories of writing poems, CLiF presenter Marv Klassen-Landis recalls making up silly rhymes and reciting them to his family. But it was not until high school that one of his first works, a free-verse poem about canoeing, was published in a journal of student writings. *“This was the first time I realized that my own imagination connects with others’ imaginations. I realized anyone can write.”*

Marv took this realization seriously and has made a career out of writing. He also shares this philosophy with students across the Twin States inspiring them to read and write through CLiF presentations. After Marv’s CLiF library event in Troy, NH, Library Director Catherine Callegari said, *“Marv had the children and adults captivated from the start. He began with a poem complete with sounds and pantomimed motions. Then he*



Marv Klassen-Landis

*had the children recite the poem back to him using only the sounds and motions. It was amazing that they remembered the whole thing and had a blast doing it.”*

*“I love CLiF’s mission of literacy for kids,”* said Marv. *“I’ve been all over Vermont and New Hampshire often in small, rural communities. I know these communities and how much they need the help.”*

Not only does he serve as a presenter for CLiF’s Writing Workshops, Author Visits, Summer Readers, and Rural Public Library programs, but Marv also works with students through his own project, Children’s Voices Theatre, a performance theatre based on the writings of children in grades K-6. *“I’ve had students run up to me after a presentation when I’m packing up and leaving, to hand me a new poem they had just written during lunch.”*

Marv’s books include *Jump, Children, Jump!*, a book of poetry and photographs, and his poems are found in various anthologies and journals. Learn more by visiting Marv’s listing on the Vermont Arts Council’s website.

## Head Over Heels in North Troy



*Lots of inspired preschoolers and happy parents in North Troy, VT (pop. 2,256)*

When CLiF provided a Rural Public Library Sponsorship to the William H. & Lucy F. Rand Memorial Library in North Troy, NH, we also gave a special storytelling and book donation event to 80 energetic tykes from local daycares, preschools, and the local Head Start program. After the rousing, laughter-filled storytelling, each child chose two books to keep from an expansive selection.

*“The event was absolutely awesome,”* said librarian Gloria Willis. *“The children and parents were so enthusiastic. In a town where*

*very little happens, this was a big community event. And the \$2,000 in new books from the CLiF grant enhanced our library’s collection tremendously.”*

The event reinforced ties between early education providers and the local library — a crucial partnership in supporting early childhood literacy. *“We now have preschoolers and Head Start kids coming in once a week for library programs,”* Willis reported. CLiF thanks the A.D. Henderson Foundation for its generous support of our childcare events in Vermont.

## Community Literacy Awards

*(continued from page 1)*

Vermont author Natalie Kinsey-Warnock, and a writing workshop with poet Geof Hewitt. *“With CLiF’s award, our community will be able to provide our children with quality literacy events, books, workshops, and celebrations all geared toward inspiring the reader and writer in all of us,”* said Kat Colby, the local coordinator.

CLiF is also investing \$30,000 to work with a team of professional evaluators to measure the impact of its Community Literacy Awards and identify the most effective ways of building a love of literacy throughout communities in New Hampshire and Vermont. *More exciting news coming soon!*



# Summer Readers Program Quadruples

When school closes over the summer children tend to have fewer books in their lives, and their reading comprehension frequently declines. This 'summer slide' often hits low-income children the hardest.

For the past six summers CLiF presenters have donned flip-flops and traveled to dozens of towns to help counteract the slide. We tell inspiring stories and talk about the power of books and reading with thousands of low-income children.

These popular Summer Readers presentations take place in campgrounds, mobile home parks, at food programs, refugee gatherings, and Boys & Girls Clubs. At the end of every event each child is able to select two new books to keep from hundreds of high-quality titles.

This summer CLiF gave 41 presentations to 2,200 children throughout the Twin States. Demand for this program has quadrupled since it started in 2006! Feedback from this summer's events shows why:



Children with their new books at a Summer Readers event in Springfield, VT (VPR's Brian Kinney and Casella Waste's Steven McDonnell at back right)

*"Children and parents were excited to take the books home. Some children's families just can't afford books. They are a luxury, not a necessity."* **Gilsum, NH**

*"The presentation was excellent and the children loved the storytelling. They don't get many opportunities to hear a storyteller. They kept moving closer and closer. Several times they had to be told to move back, they were so into the story!"* **Enosburg, VT**

*"One parent whose child HATES to read said he loved Duncan's storytelling and is now reading books!"* **Highgate, VT**

Thanks to a recent partnership with Casella Waste and Vermont Public Radio CLiF received 6,500 new children's books, many of which were donated to lucky summer readers. Kudos to everyone who made this program a success!

## A Very Tough Decision!

Here at CLiF we're not afraid to ask tough questions, such as: **What's your favorite children's book?** Here's how three long-time supporters (and book lovers) responded:

"No, no, no! The whole glory of books — the lure of the library, the blessing of the bookstore — is the wonder of being able to visit so many old friends and intriguing new seductions! How could I choose *A Wrinkle in Time* over *Narnia* books or *The Golden Compass* or *The Phantom Tollbooth*? Those I reread now. Some I've grown beyond, but I spent hours enjoying unattainable dogs and horses with Albert Payson Terhune, Walter Farley, and Jim Kjelgaard. And every time a friend has a baby I give them *Jamberry*, followed a couple years later by *Blueberries for Sal* (which I ceremonially re-read each July)." — **Ruth Sylvester, East Thetford, VT**

"*The Hobbit*. My parents bought me a beautiful edition of *The Hobbit* about 35 years ago, and I just finished reading it with our 10-year-old son. It is Tolkien at his best, and it captures the grand themes of friendship, courage, perseverance, and loyalty in a narrative that is exciting for kids and grown-ups alike. Both of our boys, 10 and 14, have declared this book is one of their absolute favorites." — **Dan Lynch, Lyme, NH**



These children also find it difficult to select a favorite book!

"It is hard for me to pick one favorite children's book, since it was constantly changing. Looking back now as a grandmother, and reading to our grandkids, it is fun to remember some favorites. I was always fascinated by Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* and worried how he could squeeze under the gate to escape Farmer McGregor. Howard Garis' *Uncle Wiggly* was an early chapter book that I remember more being read to me, and the suspense endings of each chapter. A.A. Milne's wonderful poems in *When We Were Very Young* told great stories. I loved the sound of words and wonderful illustrations. I could go on for paragraphs to get through all the stages of 'favorite books!'"

— **Barbara Hall, Etna, NH**

# Mothers Behind Bars

*“My son loves to read train books. He’ll read the same book over and over if it has trains in it.”* The young mother smiled at the memory, then gazed out the window towards the encircling rolls of barbed wire. The location was the New Hampshire State Prison for Women in Goffstown. The event was another CLiF Prison Seminar.

Nationally, 70% of inmates have low literacy skills, and their children are also at high risk in this area. That’s why for almost a decade CLiF has worked with hundreds of male and female inmates in 17 prisons across New Hampshire and Vermont. Many inmates in Goffstown have little, if any, experience reading with their children. *“A lot of women struggle with it,”* said inmate Cara LeBlanc. *“They don’t really start to read until they come to prison ... and they have a lot of regrets about not having done it before with their kids.”*

There are several ways CLiF helps reconnect these fractured families through literacy: 1) CLiF donates new children’s libraries for family visiting rooms; 2) performs storytelling programs for families to spark enthusiasm for reading; 3) provides seminars for inmates to encourage and help them to read to their children; and 4) allows inmates to select new children’s books to read aloud onto audio or video tapes and then send the recordings and books home to their children.

The CLiF seminars also give inmates many tips on making reading with children fun and easy even for those with low literacy skills. *“The part where you don’t have to read the story, you can just tell the story, that was really cool,”* said inmate Ivonne Hernandez. *“I’m going to try that with my granddaughters the next time they come.”*



*A room rich with books, children, and stories in Starksboro, VT (pop. 1,944)*

## Starksboro Library Receives “Amazing Gift”

Librarian Lisa Daudon of Starksboro, VT recently described watching CLiF’s Duncan McDougall spin a yarn for a full house of 150 young readers and 50 parents and teachers at the Robinson Elementary School.

*“He talked about a recent trip he took to Indonesia with such detail that I found myself wrapped up in his experience,”* said Lisa. *“When he revealed he had taken that trip through a book, I was surprised. It reminded me, once again, of the power of books.”*

After the event, Duncan and Lisa visited the Starksboro Cooperative Preschool, where Duncan gave another storytelling presentation for preschoolers.

*“Several children in the group often struggle with focus,”* Lisa said. *“But they were entranced, engaged, and gave wonderful answers to Duncan’s questions.”*

Lisa was “honored” to accept the CLiF Rural Library Sponsorship on behalf of the Starksboro Public Library. The sponsorship included the elementary school storytelling presentation and a donation of \$2,000 in new children’s books to the public library. Also included were collections of books for two local childcare centers, plus two brand-new books for each child who attended storytelling presentations at each center.

The Starksboro sponsorship was made possible by a generous donation from CLiF supporter Robert Burge, who made his donation in memory of his wife, Ruth. Lisa was touched and wrote to Mr. Burge that his gift reminded her of her parents. *“My parents, who were avid readers, died a few years ago and it is the kind of thing they would have loved to have done,”* she said. *“You have given our library and our community an amazing gift.”*

## Leaving a Legacy of Literacy

Can you imagine life without books, reading, and writing? If you can’t, please consider supporting 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. For more information contact Duncan at [clif@clifonline.org](mailto:clif@clifonline.org) or 802.244.0944.

**Thank you!**



# CLiF Loves Its Local Volunteers



Volunteers Cody Fiala, Martha Howsmon, Al Fiebig, and Jim Comley in the CLiF donation library

CLiF is incredibly lucky to have a team of dedicated volunteers helping us every week to maintain our book donation library, pack boxes of books for events, and help with administrative tasks.

Our volunteers include Jim Comley, Margaret Luce, Al Fiebig, Martha Howsmon, and Cody Fiala. They come from all walks of

life but one thing they share is their passion for CLiF's mission. Commented Martha: *"I enjoy thinking that books I packed will reach children who might not otherwise have books in their lives."* Jim and Margaret have volunteered for more than two years, while Martha and Al began their weekly visits nine months ago. Cody joined the group this summer and comes from South Hero every week to lend a hand. We really appreciate all they do for us!

There have been many recent improvements to the CLiF office. One notable upgrade is the revitalization of our book library, where our volunteers work. With CLiF serving more children every year, it didn't take us long to notice our current shelving was not nearly spacious enough for the ever-growing collection of new books we donate to young readers.

So we purchased more shelving and made room for more boxes. But the space was still a little *drab*. Since our volunteers spend many hours in this room, we resurfaced the floor with bright blue and yellow tiles and installed French doors to let in more light. The room is now happier, brighter, and more inviting. Come visit the CLiF offices to get a tour and meet our wonderful volunteers!

## New Books by CLiF Presenters

CLiF is fortunate to work with an extraordinary group of more than 50 professional children's book authors, illustrators, and poets who give CLiF presentations about the joys of reading and writing to children across New Hampshire and Vermont. We wanted to let you know about the fantastic books our presenters write and illustrate when they're not working with us!

**David Martin's** newest children's book is *Little Bunny and the Magic Christmas Tree* (Candlewick Press, September 2011), with illustrations by Valeri Gorbachev. In this book, Little Bunny is tired of being the smallest.

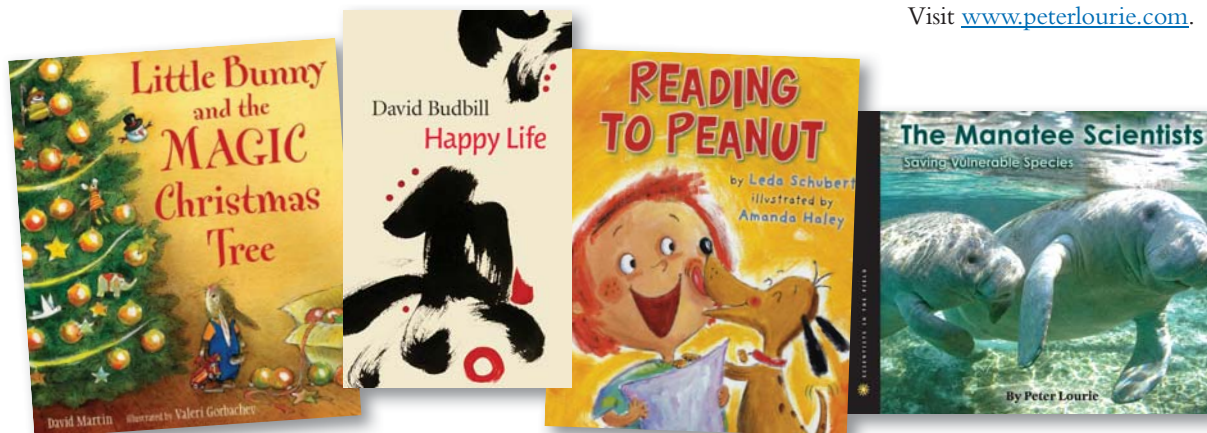
But thanks to some Christmas magic and an enchanted tree, he gets teenier still – and has a BIG adventure. Visit [www.davidmartin.com](http://www.davidmartin.com).

In **David Budbill's** new book of poems, *Happy Life* (Copper Canyon Press, September 2011), the poet continues his wry, joyful examination of life, New England seasons, fame and fortune, self-reliance, aging, and the engaged creative life. *Booklist* calls Budbill "One of the most readable American poets ever." Visit [www.davidbudbill.com](http://www.davidbudbill.com).

**Leda Shubert's** newest book for children is *Reading to Peanut* (Holiday House, September 2011), illustrated by Amanda Haley. In this book, Lucy needs to learn to read.

Why? She has a secret – and it involves her dog, Peanut. As *Kirkus Reviews* says, "Learning to read can be an adventure, as this determined little girl and her pup demonstrate...." Visit [www.ledaschubert.com](http://www.ledaschubert.com).

**Peter Lourie's** newest book for young learners is *The Manatee Scientists: Saving Vulnerable Species* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, April 2011). Lourie writes about intrepid scientists in the US, Brazil, and Senegal who are working hard to save this endangered species threatened by human development in many parts of the world. Visit [www.peterlourie.com](http://www.peterlourie.com).



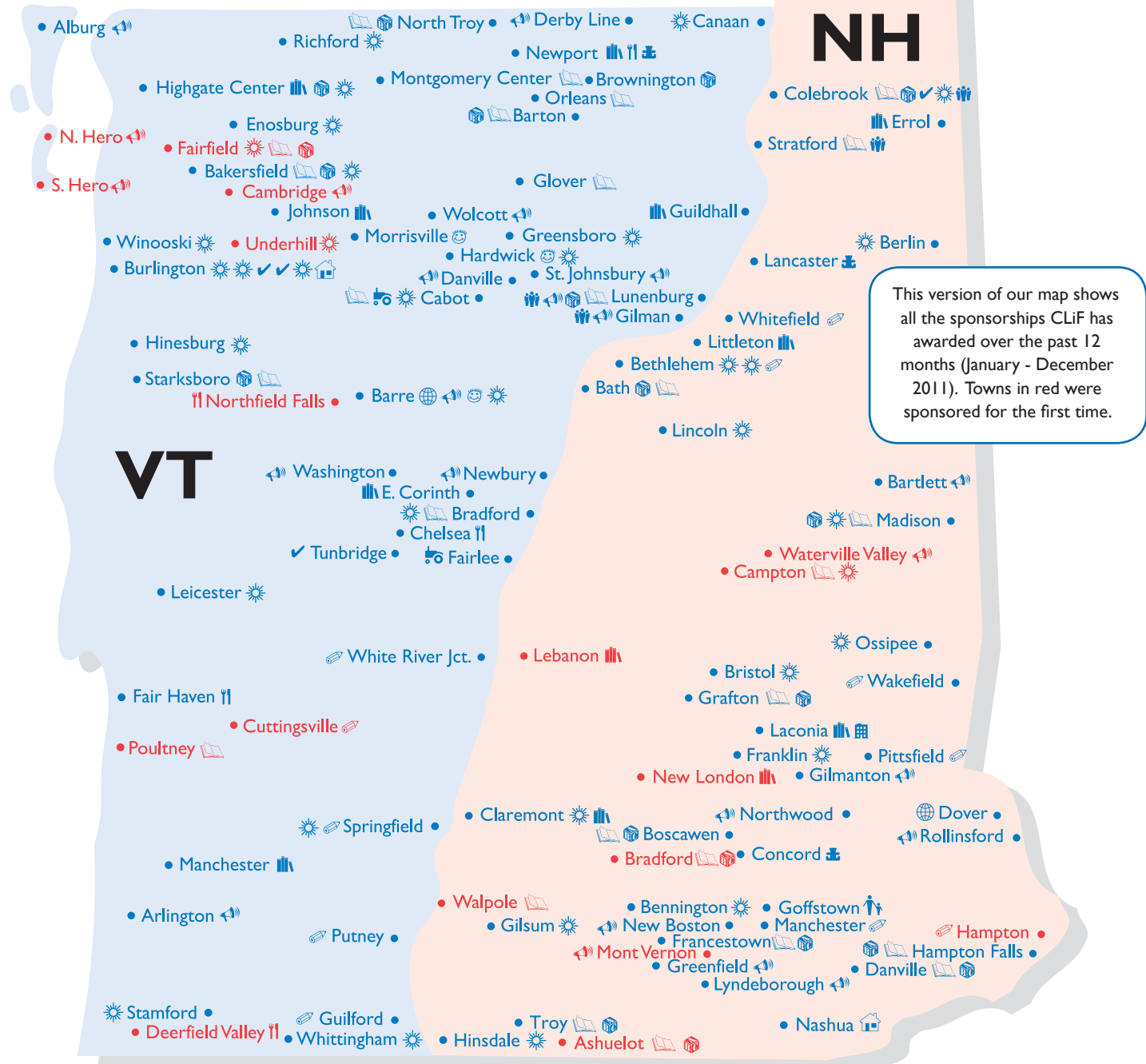
# CLiF Sponsorships (January - December 2011)

Since 1998 CLiF has touched the lives of more than 120,000 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		Community Literacy





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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!

Boys with their new treasures in  
Lunenburg, VT (pop. 1,328)



Note from a young CLiF reader

Thank you for the books  
that you brought to our school and  
let me have 2 books. Today I'm  
starting a new series of books.  
And you also encouraged me to read  
more !!!!!

