

Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF)

Nurturing a love of reading and writing among low-income, at-risk and rural children throughout New Hampshire and Vermont



CLiF Adapts in a Time of Crisis



A Bridgewater, NH teacher packs new books to be sent home to students

Well, this spring hasn't gone exactly as planned. Schools and libraries are closed, our regular in-person storytelling events have all been cancelled, and the CLiF office has gone virtual. Our team has been very busy brainstorming creative ways we can continue to serve the most vulnerable children in our region during these difficult times. We've offered online family seminars on reading and storytelling, and storytelling/Q&A sessions with our presenters. In addition to providing new books to our current partners, CLiF has also given thousands of new books to dozens of organizations

across Vermont and New Hampshire, helping send home books along with nutritious meals and other educational resources.

Low-income, at-risk, and rural children are most significantly impacted by the lack of access to learning experiences and resources. With schools and libraries closed, many of these children don't have books at home and are at risk of falling behind. In short, CLiF's mission to inspire a love of reading and writing and encourage literacy skills in vulnerable children has never been more important.

One of the things that makes CLiF unique is our roster of more than 65 talented authors, illustrators, poets, graphic novelists, and storytellers who share their passion for reading and writing with kids. Normally, our presenters visit schools, libraries, shelters, affordable housing communities, afterschool programs, and childcare centers, and many more spaces where kids spend time. But that is no longer possible.

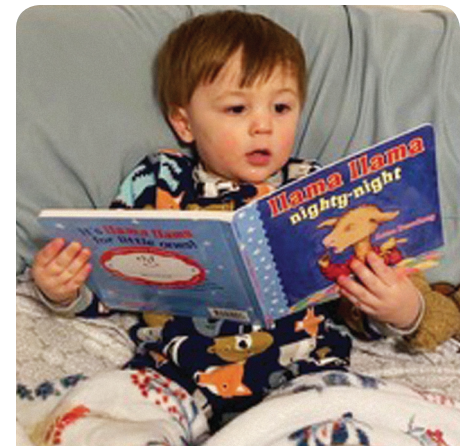
CLiF presenters have stepped up to the challenge of these unpredictable times, offering storytelling sessions and writing/drawing lessons online, along with other fun literacy activities. Most publishers have relaxed their policies on recording their books, so many teachers and librarians (and even celebrities!) have been recording storytimes for children to watch at home. Educators and librarians, already our heroes, have been working hard to ensure the kids and families they serve have the resources they need to keep learning and growing.

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Our Summer Readers program is going to look a little different this year, but we'll still be offering storytelling sessions (possibly online) and thousands of new books to kids who need them most. While so much remains uncertain, one thing's for sure; CLiF is here, and we're always ready to help!



A young reader in Washington, VT reads his new CLiF book

Waiting to See Their Smiling Faces

CLiF has always been an extremely responsive and innovative nonprofit. We've had plenty of opportunities to practice those skills lately! Here are a few examples of creative actions we've taken to continue inspiring thousands of low-income, at-risk and rural children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Online Presentations:** We share links to online presentations by CLiF presenters (e.g., see [Marek Bennett](#) create a graphic novel, or watch [Ann Braden](#) talk about creative writing).
- **Family Literacy Ideas:** We provide families with scores of fun and easy low-cost and no-cost literacy activities for kids.
- **Virtual Author Events:** Each week a new CLiF presenter gives a live online presentation about their work, and shares tips and stories. Children can watch and ask questions.
- **Distributing New Books:** At a time when so many children are stuck at home, CLiF is busy distributing thousands of books through:
 - **Schools** that add books with the lunches that are being delivered to kids by school bus
 - **Libraries** that leave books on people's doorsteps, or hang them in bags on the library railing for people to take
 - **Soup Kitchens** that allow kids to select new books when they get a meal, thereby feeding young minds and bodies
 - **Homeless Shelters** that give new CLiF books to every child in residence
 - **Childcare Centers** that provide educational materials and beautiful CLiF books to their families
 - **Prisons** where inmates provide CLiF with the names and ages of their kids and we mail new books to hundreds of the young readers

Rest assured CLiF will continue doing everything within our power to inspire deserving young readers and writers throughout the Twin States, even though we may not see their smiling faces for a while. *Thanks for your support!*


Duncan McDougall
CLiF Executive Director



Duncan shares stories during a recent Facebook Live seminar on reading with young kids

Who's Who

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And check out our blog for up-to-the-minute stories, news, trends in literacy, parenting topics, book recommendations, and more, posted by a roster of staff and guest bloggers.

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Eric Carle at the Theatre Inspires Young Readers

There is something undeniably magical about watching beloved children's stories come alive at the theatre. In March a group of children and families involved with programming at Capstone Community Action in Orange County, Vermont visited the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth to see a puppet theatre performance of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia brought Eric Carle's story to life with giant, beautifully colored puppets that completely captivated this group of young children and their caregivers.

Roseann Emerson, a Head Start 3-5 Home Visitor with Capstone Community Action in Orange County, proposed this creative field trip to CLiF and received funding through CLiF's At-Risk Children Momentum grant. This new grant opportunity provides funding for creative field trips and literacy projects to partners that have recently worked with CLiF through the At-Risk Children grant. The goal of the Momentum grant is to help our partners sustain engagement with literacy skills in the months following their initial CLiF events.

Viewing this classic story on stage was a novel and exciting experience for the children and families who attended the performance. One parent remarked, "I never knew my child could be so engaged." The group also enjoyed healthy snacks during their outing directly



One young reader with his new copy of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

inspired by the book: apples, pears, salami, and watermelon. This small-scale feast prompted one child to ask, "How did the caterpillar eat all those snacks?" Each family in attendance also received four Eric Carle books to add to their home library so they could continue to explore the colorful world presented in these classic children's stories.

Capstone Community Action in Vermont is one of our many partners across VT and NH who continue to work creatively to serve and support families. During this challenging period of school and childcare closures, they have assisted CLiF in distributing 750 books to Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Washington and Orange County. We greatly appreciate their efforts to keep children reading during this crisis!

Thanks to Jess Eakin!

CLiF is very sorry to be saying farewell to CLiF Board member **Jess Eakin**, who recently completed her full six-year Board term during which she served as a stellar Board Secretary and Chair. Jess is media specialist at Hanover High School, in Hanover, NH, and the former director of Youth-in-Action, a nonprofit that connects local students with volunteer opportunities. Jess brought a tremendous amount of energy, ideas, and dedication to CLiF and our work, and we were very fortunate to have her on our team. *Thanks, Jess!*



Light in a Dark Place

CLiF's Children of Prison Inmates program continues to grow as we add new prison partners, and as more inmates attend our events. In a typical year, our presenters spend almost 30 days visiting the prisons we serve across NH or VT!

In each prison CLiF provides: 1) regular seminars that help inmates be more effective sharing books with their children; 2) new children's books for inmates to select and mail home to their kids; 3) special Family Fun Day celebrations with food, games, stories, and books; and 4) the opportunity for inmates to record books on CD or MP3s and mail the books and recordings home to their children.

We thought you would enjoy reading the following message we received recently from the wife of an inmate. He is incarcerated at the men's prison in Berlin,

NH and attends CLiF events regularly. His wife described the profoundly positive impact CLiF's program has had on their entire family:

”

“My daughter, as well as her brothers, receive books every other month from her dad at the Northern NH Correctional Facility, and it's something that the kids look forward to each time! She is 5 and just yesterday she says to me, ‘Mommy, when will it be the end of the month?’ and I said to her, ‘In just a few days, why, what's up?’ and she says, ‘Because that's when I get my books from daddy in the mail!’

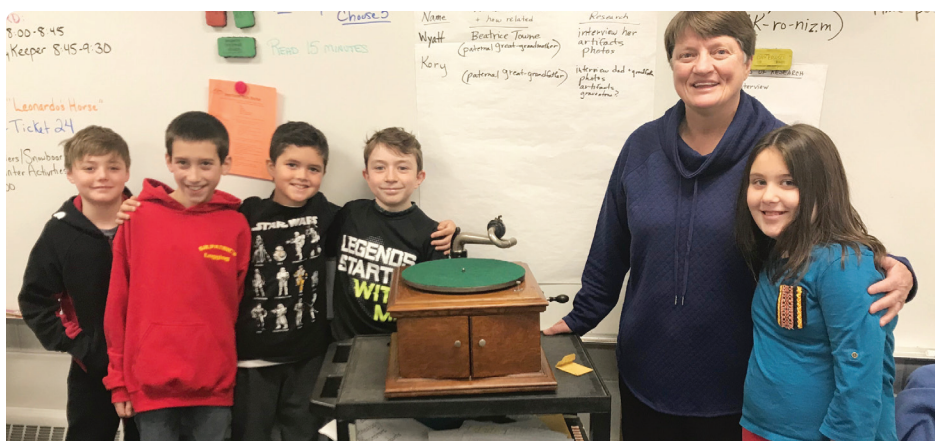
We have several recorded books, a library of regular books that have been mailed home, and the kids are always eager to check the mail to see if there are any books in the box. CLiF



Inmates in Berlin, NH write personal notes to their children in the books the men have selected. CLiF mails the books home to their kids.

is definitely something that has kept my daughter more connected to her dad while he is away, and we couldn't be anymore thankful than we are for both the “Family Fun Days” as well as being able to have books sent home to us every other month. The program that you guys offer is nothing short of incredible and gives kids a small light from a place that is looked upon to be so darkly.”

Celebrating a Year of Literacy in Bridgewater



Author Natalie Kinsey-Warnock shares family artifacts with Bridgewater-Hebron students

It's been a busy year at Bridgewater-Hebron Village School (BHVS) in Bridgewater, NH. Students have had author/storyteller visits and workshops with several CLiF presenters, including author/illustrator/musician [Jim Arnosky](#) and storyteller [Duncan McDougall](#). Author [Natalie Kinsey-Warnock](#) led a six-day genealogy project in which students researched their family histories and shared them with their community. [Ted Scheu](#) "That Poetry Guy" spent three days working with the

kindergarteners through second graders writing their own poetry. Author/illustrator [Marty Kelley](#) led a family literacy celebration, in which he gave tips for reading together and told his hilarious stories at a free community dinner, where families chose new books.

This has all been possible thanks to CLiF's Year of the Book grant, which provides \$25,000 in interactive author visits and workshops, family events, mini-grants and new books for classrooms, the school library, and the local public library, along

with ten new books for each child to choose! The goals of the Year of the Book are to increase enthusiasm for reading and writing, supplement schools' existing literacy efforts, increase family engagement, and create a community-wide culture of literacy. BHVS is one of ten schools in New Hampshire and Vermont selected for the 2019-2020 school year.

BHVS teachers have used CLiF mini-grants to purchase puppets for the kindergarten puppet theater, materials for second graders' artist/writers workshops, and new Mo Willems books for first graders. Third through fifth graders got new texts to support their STEAM units, connecting literacy and science.

When COVID-19 hit, BHVS teachers packed up new books from CLiF and sent them home in distance learning packets. Even with school closed, Bridgewater students got their own brand-new books to enjoy at home.

Despite an unexpected end to the school year, Bridgewater students continue to enjoy a love of reading and writing, thanks to the Year of the Book!

CLiF Partners with Vermont Migrant Education

This winter, CLiF partnered with the Vermont Migrant Education Program to reach migrant kids and families. In February, migrant families gathered at the Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury, VT for a fun free day of activities, including interactive storytelling (with a translator) by CLiF's Executive Director, Duncan McDougall. He got kids excited about reading and stories through his animated storytelling style. He also led a discussion for parents and families on ways to engage kids in books and stories, even if you're not a strong reader yourself. He emphasized the importance of reading aloud together and helping kids build literacy skills, which are some of the strongest indicators of a child's future success. At the end of the presentation, each child got to pick out four brand-new books from a wide selection.

Vermont Migrant Education Program coordinator Kelly Dolan says, *"About half of our students are English Language Learners typically from Mexico or Guatemala, and all of the students' parents have moved recently and done agriculturally related work. These moves mean that possessions, such as books, often can't travel with families. CLiF gave the much appreciated gift of books to children in the Migrant Education Program."*

This exciting new partnership is one way CLiF aims to inspire a love of reading and writing among Vermont and New Hampshire's most vulnerable kids, who are at risk of developing low literacy skills. CLiF provides tips and new books to children from many walks of life to encourage reading and writing at home. For many of the kids CLiF serves, they have few or even no other books of their own.



A migrant student selects new books for herself

Dolan says, *"One mother shared that, although her children may not be able to physically travel everywhere, she knows that they can explore anywhere and be anyone through reading a story."*

Making a Big Impact on Small Rural Communities



Duncan tells stories to students at Metawee Community School in Pawlet, VT

Students at Metawee Community School in Pawlet, VT gathered on the carpet in the school's library, listening attentively as CLiF Executive Director/storyteller Duncan McDougall told stories in his signature animated style. Pawlet public librarian Mary Lou Willits was also there to show off the new children's books CLiF donated to the public library, as well as the school library. She says, *"To add \$2,000 worth of new children's books to our library and \$500 worth of new children's books to the school library has a very big impact on our small rural community."*

This event was the kick-off of CLiF's Rural Libraries grant, which provides storytelling, new books for the school and public library, new books for each child to choose, and funds for special programs at selected public libraries and their local schools across New Hampshire and Vermont. Pawlet Public Library was one of twelve libraries selected in NH and VT for this year's grant.

This sponsorship was made possible by generous CLiF donor Meg Sullivan, who attended the kick-off event in Pawlet in

the fall. She says, *"It was wonderful to see the bright faces of young students fully engaged by his dynamic storytelling. Hundreds of books were placed around the room for the children to choose from, and I could see how eager and hungry they were to discover new ideas and places through these books... Opening a child's mind to limitless possibilities through literacy is a powerful thing to do — this was palpably present in the room. These books will follow them out of the classroom to the home, which is a significant feature of the CLiF model; having books in the child's immediate environment helps create lifelong readers."*

The goals of CLiF's Rural Libraries grant are to inspire a love of reading and writing, to help small public libraries update and supplement their collections, to increase circulation and attendance at the library, and to strengthen the library's connection to the local school and greater community.

Meg Sullivan says, *"Teaming up with CLiF's winning programs has made it possible for me to participate in this crucial work, and I am thrilled to play a role. I hope each member of our community will help CLiF promote a love of reading."*

CLiF Trains Early Educators in Literacy

Research shows that the period from birth to age five is an essential time for children's development and preparation for learning. *Reading is one of the best activities families and early educators can do to prepare their kids to succeed in school and in life.* Some research shows that children who have been read to on a regular basis enter kindergarten having been exposed to up to one million words more than other children without that experience. This means that kids who haven't been exposed to books start school already behind. *Low-income children are more likely to have fewer, or even no, books at home and lack access to libraries and other resources, particularly in rural communities.*

CLiF set out to teach educators working with our youngest populations just how important reading to them regularly is, and provide tips for sharing books and stories successfully. CLiF created an

eighteen-minute training video on reading for early educators (we also created a series of shorter videos for parents). *Thanks to a grant from the Couch Family Foundation, we launched a pilot project in the Upper Valley of New Hampshire and Vermont to gather early educators to watch this video.* Viewers completed a brief questionnaire on the content and received new books for their program, as well as refreshments for a viewing party.

This program is serving twelve childcare centers in the Upper Valley, as well as future educators at Randolph Technical Center. We visited the high school's early educator class, where students interned with local childcare centers. The students watched the video and came prepared with questions and anecdotes about their own experiences reading with kids. They got to choose two new books to share with the kids they work with and



A parent and young child read together

they practiced reading aloud, using the techniques outlined in the video.

This is one way CLiF is preparing our current and future workforce to help our youngest kids develop strong literacy skills, love reading and writing, and enter school ready to learn.

Building Communities and Keeping up Literacy Momentum



Author/illustrator Liza Woodruff shares stories with Morrisville, VT students

CLiF's Community Building and Momentum grants expand literacy initiatives into community-wide creations! While COVID-19 interrupted plans, CLiF will work with grantees to complete some of these exciting projects:

Community Poetry Day in Colebrook, NH: The Colebrook public librarian received a Community Building Grant to bring poet [Matt Forrest Esenwine](#) to work

with classes at the Colebrook Elementary School. Luckily, he was able to visit, but the community event for poets of all ages to share their poems about Colebrook ended up virtual. Look for recordings of winning poets reading their poems on the library's web site. Some grant funds will be redirected to a joint effort between the library, Colebrook Recreation Department, and the Colebrook

Community Trails Committee to display picture books and youth art and writing on an intergenerational story walk.

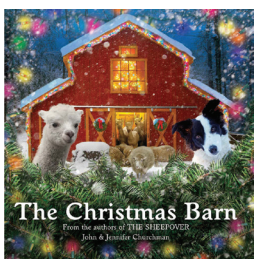
The Momentum grant allows schools \$1,000 in the year following their Year of the Book to further solidify traditions around literacy activities. Two schools used their grants to make books. In Bristol, NH, fifth grade students started the book-making project when they interviewed local business owners and wrote informational pieces that were compiled into a book called *Neighborhood Partners*. In Morristown, VT, their Year of the Book grant provided funds for the art teacher to have each student create a super hero profile that was used to make a yearbook. This year, the book's theme was how MES students make a difference, and they received initial inspiration from author/illustrator [Liza Woodruff](#).

Song writing and comic workshops also promised to guide students in using words, stories, art, and music to better understand their world. We look forward to learning how CLiF grants and presenters can continue this effort in the wake of COVID-19.

News from CLiF's Presenters

[Marek Bennett's](#) graphic novel, *Freeman Colby Vol. 2*, has been nominated for Best Graphic Novel by the National Cartoonists Society Reuben Awards and Best in YA/Non-Fiction by Pop Culture Classroom's Excellence in Graphic Literature Awards.

[Simon Brooks](#) offers Facebook Live storytelling sessions on Wednesday afternoons at <https://www.facebook.com/simonbrookstoryteller/>.



[John and Jennifer Churchman's](#) latest picture book, *A Christmas Barn*, is coming out in the fall.

[Matt Forrest Esenwine](#) published the poem "Construction Project Manager" in [Construction People](#) and the poem "Pillow" in the forthcoming anthology, [Night Wishes](#).

[Terry Farish](#) co-wrote *Aii Yee, Joseph!* (Groundwood Books, 2021) with the South Sudanese musician and writer, OD Bonny, illustrated by Ken Daley.

Fresh Picked Poetry (Charlesbridge), poems by Michelle Schaub and illustrated by [Amy Huntington](#), is out in paperback. Huntington also illustrated *Nine: A Book of Nonet Poems* by Irene Latham.

[Christy Mihaly's](#) new picture book, *Free for You and Me: What Our First Amendment Means*, introduces kids to the rights protected by the First Amendment,



with poems, stories, and historical vignettes. Christy also recently published two 6-book series,

Shaping the Debate (2019), covering a range of political issues, and *Governing the United States* (2020) about the U.S. government.

[Eric Pinder's](#) picture book *The Perfect Pillow* (Disney-Hyperion) received



the 2019 New Hampshire Literary Award for Outstanding Work of Children's Literature.

[Lindsey Stoddard](#) has a new middle grade novel, *Brave Like That* (HarperCollins).

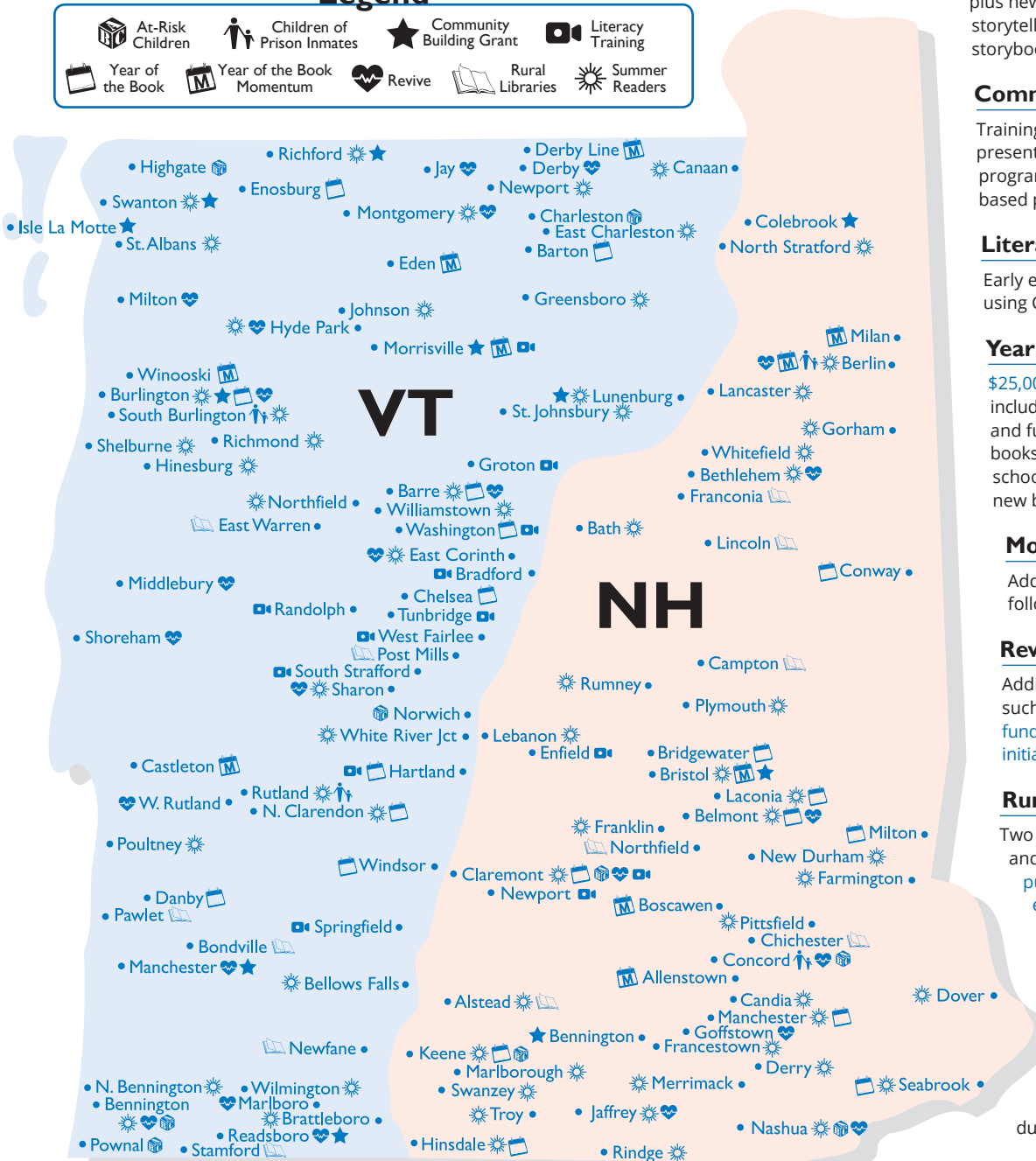
CLiF Sponsorships (January – December 2019)

Since 1998 CLiF has served almost 300,000 children in more than 420 towns across New Hampshire and Vermont. Through nine programs—and with the partnership of more than 65 professional authors, illustrators, poets, storytellers and graphic novelists—CLiF inspires low-income, at-risk, and rural children to love reading and writing.

CLiF provides free, inspiring literacy programs and new books to: children of prison inmates; refugee, migrant and foster children; children who live in shelters and low-income housing; and children served by bookmobiles, Head Start, Boys & Girls Clubs, and other social service organizations. CLiF sponsors rural libraries, elementary schools, prisons, and provides programs to dozens of other sites that serve children.

Legend

At-Risk Children	Children of Prison Inmates	Community Building Grant	Literacy Training
Year of the Book	Year of the Book Momentum	Revive	Rural Libraries
		Summer Readers	



At-Risk Children

Storytelling presentations and new on-site library for partnering organizations serving at-risk children, a parent seminar, and two new books for each child.

Children of Prison Inmates

Family literacy seminars for incarcerated parents and new books to send home to their kids, grandkids, or nieces and nephews, plus new on-site children's libraries, storytelling, family events, and the storybook program.

Community Building

Training with CLiF's professional presenters, new books, and program support for community-based programs.

Literacy Training

Early educator literacy training using CLiF's video.

Year of the Book

\$25,000 in literacy programming, including author visits, workshops, and fun family events, plus new books for ten selected elementary schools in NH and VT, and ten new books for each child.

Momentum

Additional literacy support following the Year of the Book.

Revive

Additional literacy support, such as author visits and funding for special literacy initiatives for past CLiF partners.

Rural Libraries

Two storytelling presentations and new books for rural public libraries and local elementary schools, plus two new books for each child and a program grant.

Summer Readers

Inspiring storytelling presentations and two new books for each child during the summer.



Children's Literacy Foundation
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When you're done,
please share this
newsletter with a friend!



A young reader
is excited for her
new books

Note from a young reader and writer

Dear Clif,
Thank you for all of
the books I liked
the authors
~~authors~~ coming
to.

