

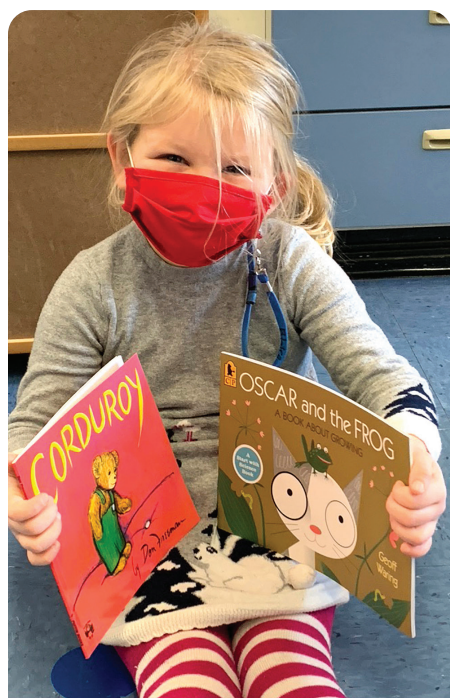
Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF)



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

## Keeping Communities Together

### How Libraries Have Adapted During the Pandemic



A Richford, VT pre-schooler with her new books

Public libraries are the heart of communities, particularly in small, rural towns with limited resources and opportunities for engaging programming. During the COVID-19 pandemic, librarians and staff have worked tirelessly to continue offering the services their patrons rely on.

Jonathan Clark, Vermont State Library Consultant of Children and Teen Services, says, *"Over the last year, libraries in Vermont stepped up to meet the needs of their communities. Even when buildings were closed, libraries provided essential services as they responded to the impacts of COVID-19*

*and social unrest. Libraries shifted quickly to offer expanded online checkout services and virtual programming. Curbside services became a way to connect communities with resources... School librarians played a critical role in supporting remote learning needs and connecting students with resources around mental health and social justice. This summer Vermont libraries will continue to expand services and find creative ways to meet the needs of their communities as they slowly begin to open their doors again!"*

Since 1998, CLiF's Rural Libraries Program has sponsored roughly 90% of all the rural public libraries across New Hampshire and Vermont in towns with 5,000 or fewer residents. Many have been sponsored two or three times. Many of these libraries have limited hours, staffing, and budgets, and their collections are often out-of-date. The Rural Libraries Program provides new children's and young adult books to the public library, in addition to new books to the local elementary school, funds for library programming, and two storytelling events (virtual or outdoors this year) with a book giveaway for local kids.

As part of their Rural Libraries Program, our 2020-2021 partners have used the funds to create new STEAM kits, obtain audio books for kids, and start a multi-generational book club, among other innovative ways to reach kids and families.

One Jaffrey, NH patron thanked their local library: *"...thank you from my family for the unbelievably awesome summer reading*

## What's Inside

### Vol. 23, No. 1

Thoughts from a Loyal Supporter .....	3
Author Visits in Your Home .....	3
Celebrating Year of the Book in a Strange Year .....	4
Book Club for Grownups .....	4
Staying Together While Apart .....	5
Kids' Poetry .....	5
"Books Provide a Safe Space" .....	5
Community Literacy Conference Goes Virtual .....	6
News from CLiF's Presenters .....	6
CLiF Sponsorships .....	7

*program you put on this year as well as for all the incredibly hard work you all have been putting into curbside pick-up! My kids have thoroughly enjoyed getting books, steam kits, crafts to go and virtual to go items from the library. We see how much you have put into the programs at the library and we wanted to say thank you!!" We'll echo that thank you to librarians everywhere for providing for their communities in a difficult time, and for keeping our communities together.*



Cabot Public Library in Cabot, VT was a 2020-2021 Rural Libraries partner

# You've Got Mail!

The pandemic has led many low-income and at-risk children to fall dangerously behind in their literacy skills. In New Hampshire, Vermont, and beyond, factors such as limited access to high-speed internet, disrupted learning schedules, and a dearth of books at home have created a perfect storm for those children with the greatest needs. In 2020, the number of children with reading difficulties rose 20% worldwide.

COVID posed many challenges for CLiF, as well. Our hundreds of in-person events and our conferences became virtual. We created new ways to distribute thousands of new books safely, developed scores of free online presentations, and loaded our website with powerful literacy resources. One thing that hasn't changed is the feedback we receive:

*"Our partnership (with CLiF) has truly been one of my educational highlights without a doubt. It was so wonderful..."* **School Librarian**

*"Year of the book has opened up more authentic conversations about reading interests and excitement about stories and books"* **Teacher**

*"Reading is another land for me. It's like going into another dimension... I am very, very thankful for you giving us opportunities to meet famous authors."* **Student**

*"Thank you for once again allowing us to participate in your wonderful program. You have given me a valuable way to stay in my kids' lives these past five years..."* **Prison Inmate**

*"CLiF is the best! Your support of children's literacy is unparalleled!"* **Librarian**

*"I enjoyed my 10 books I got from you! I loved Pippi Longstocking the best!"* **Student**

*"It's a pleasure and an honor to be part of CLiF programming. I look forward to hitting the road again... for CLiF!"* **CLiF Presenter**

If you're a CLiF donor, partner, Board member, presenter, or volunteer, then these notes are for you, too. Many thanks for your support, and onward!

  
Duncan McDougall  
CLiF Executive Director



Duncan leads a virtual Rural Libraries kickoff with Wardsboro, VT students

## Who's Who

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## Let's Stay In Touch!

Love getting updates from CLiF and seeing our happy young readers and writers?

Subscribe to our e-newsletter for great stories and pictures. You'll hear from us once a month, and we'll never share your e-mail address.

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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# Thoughts from a Loyal Supporter - The Rona Jaffe Foundation

More than 700 generous and loyal individuals, foundations, companies, and social organizations support CLiF's programs each year. The Rona Jaffe Foundation (RJF) is one such valued member of the CLiF family of donors. We asked their Executive Director, Beth McCabe, about RJF's partnership with CLiF.

## How did you first encounter CLiF?

**BM:** *I was the mother of a preschool child and our village library in northern Vermont was an important part of our lives. I wrote an application to CLiF on behalf of the library, and we received the grant. We had a wonderful presentation from Duncan, the library expanded its children's collection substantially, and the kids walked away happy with their beautiful, new books. Years later, when RJF expanded its giving, I reached out to CLiF. That was 12 years ago. It has been a lasting and meaningful partnership ever since.*

## Why does RJF support CLiF?

**BM:** *A love of books and reading at an early age can be life-altering. It allows us to bridge new worlds, and widen our minds. It creates*

*empathy and curiosity. It excites and emboldens us to learn about new cultures, people, places. CLiF's programs help children develop literacy skills and a love for literature and learning.*

## Why has RJF supported CLiF year after year?

**BM:** *Many nonprofits have good intentions, but not all can bring their missions to life. Over 23 years, CLiF has expanded its support of children exponentially while still remaining true to its original mission. That's no small feat! CLiF is mission driven, fiscally responsible, and well-staffed, with dedicated individuals committed to providing all children with access to the world of books through writing and reading and the opportunities it provides.*

## What are your impressions of CLiF events?

**BM:** *I've attended several CLiF events with presenters such as David Martin and Jim Amosky. The CLiF presenters are generous, engaging, and fun. They bring the power of story and imagination into children's lives and the joy and pride of learning how to write your own, especially for those who may need some help and encouragement in finding their paths to the wonderful world of literature.*



CLiF's Year of the Book program in Conway, NH, one of many sponsorships supported by The Rona Jaffe Foundation

## Why should someone support CLiF?

**BM:** *I was drawn to CLiF as a parent years ago because it reminded me of the importance of books to me as a child, and how that has remained a mainstay my entire life. I believe it's important to help provide that opportunity to all children, especially to those who might not otherwise have the chance.*

# Author Visits in Your Home

CLiF's model for nurturing a love of reading and writing depends on two important components – **allowing children to choose their own books, and inspiring them with personal interactions with professional authors, illustrators, graphic novelists, poets, and storytellers.** Early on in the COVID shutdowns, our ingenious program partners created safe options for choosing books to have at home. But delivering interactions with CLiF's 68 presenters was trickier.

Beginning in May 2020, CLiF established its Virtual Storytelling Series, a seasonal, 6-week series of live, virtual visits from our presenter's home studios and offices. Each presentation highlighted the uniqueness of the presenter's work, style, and interests, reflected in how they structured the program, how they shared their work, and how they inspired young readers and writers. Kids heard how books are created, wrote a song about dogs, drew comics, traveled to foreign countries and imagined lands, learned

about animals, and thought about how writing, singing, reading, and drawing can help us all process the confusing world.

CLiF used this as an opportunity to build our growing library of literacy program ideas. Each presenter now has a new overview of their work with program ideas and resources on CLiF's website. The events were recorded and posted to our website. One presenter responded: *"a creative response to the pandemic that will also provide an ongoing resource! Why am I not surprised?"*

A teacher wrote, *"each visit has made kids excited, even those who I would have thought unlikely. [A student] has such a personal-feeling relationship with people who write real books, and it inspires her greatly."*

While there is nothing like the real person, this series brought new ideas and new faces into classrooms and homes across Vermont and New Hampshire, and beyond, when students and adults needed it most! You



Drawing in a virtual comics workshop with Marek Bennett

can find all presentations on our website (under Resources). CLiF thanks our wonderful presenters and engaged partners for helping us create connections between kids and reading and writing.

An educator said, *"We are so thankful for your time, gift, and inspiration. The impact that you have made on the lives of our students, their families, teachers, and administration is priceless. Thank you again!"*

# Schools Celebrate the Year of the Book in a Strange Year



Belmont, NH, a 2020-2021 Year of the Book school

In what has been the most challenging school year to date for educators all over the world, nine schools across New Hampshire and Vermont were still able to pull off a fantastic year of celebrating literacy! In a typical year, CLiF's Year of the Book grant program would include many in-person visits from VT and NH authors, illustrators, songwriters, and storytellers, along with fun family events

like ice cream socials with storytelling, special guests like theater troupes, and field trips to enhance literacy learning. This year, things were a little different. We were still able to conduct many author visits virtually or outdoors with our amazing presenters. Book giveaways were slightly modified according to health guidelines, but children were still able to pick out ten new books

for themselves throughout the year. Schools and local public libraries still received thousands of dollars' worth of new children's and young adult books, and the excitement for literacy was still palpable at our nine Year of the Book schools. Year of the Book schools built Little Free Libraries, started book clubs, and held poetry workshops.

One educator said, *"In spite of the craziness of the past year, CLiF has continued to be a bright spot with regard to literacy. I admire your ability to move many programs online, and to continue to provide books to students through your various programs!"*

In the 2021-2022 school year, we'll be celebrating the Year of the Book in Braintree, VT; Burlington, VT; Canaan, NH; Farmington, NH; Highgate, VT; Lancaster, NH; Lisbon, NH; Manchester, NH; Newport City, VT; and Rutland, VT (2 schools).

We're excited to be able to hold in-person storytelling and events again this year, as well as infusing the community with new children's books!



Bestselling author Dan Brown joined us for Book Club for Grown-Ups in February

## Book Club for Grown-Ups

CLiF is known for its literacy programs and book giveaways for kids, but during the pandemic while we're all stuck at home, we've begun offering evening programming for adults, too. Many of our presenters write books for both kids and adults, and we wanted to support their work and highlight the talented writers right here in our region. CLiF's virtual Book Club for Grown-Ups has given readers all over the world the chance to engage with Vermont and New Hampshire authors, discuss books together, and learn more about CLiF's work.

CLiF's Book Club for Grown-Ups has featured Sarah Stewart Taylor's new mystery, *The Mountains Wild*, Rajnii Eddins' book of poems, *Their Names Are Mine*, 1st Case, the new thriller Vermonter Chris Tebbetts co-authored with James Patterson, and even bestselling author Dan Brown (yup, he's

from New Hampshire)! In April, we did something a little different in honor of National Poetry month. Our "Poetry Without Tears" workshop with VT poet Verandah Porche was a fun evening of writing and creating poems. Verandah encouraged poets of all experience levels to tap into their memories and creativity. In June, we discussed National Book Award-winner Katherine Paterson's memoir, *Stories of My Life*. Check [www.clifonline.org](http://www.clifonline.org) for upcoming programming, as well as videos of all Book Club discussions.

One added benefit to providing virtual programming is that readers can join from anywhere! We've had Book Club attendees from Iraq, Ireland, Mexico, India, Hawaii, and all over the country, as well as, of course, our local neighbors and friends. It's been fun connecting with readers all over the world and celebrating literacy together!





An incarcerated parent chose new books for his kids

## Staying Together While Apart

Imagine being separated from your parent for months or even years at a time. That's the case for more than 2.7 million U.S. children with a parent in prison. And for the past year, even visits have been prohibited due to COVID-19, so those children haven't seen their parents in over a year. But, for incarcerated parents in New Hampshire and Vermont, there's a way for them to stay connected to their kids through books. CLiF's Children of Prison Inmates program teaches incarcerated parents ways to engage their kids in story-telling and share books together, regardless of their own comfort with reading. In a normal year, CLiF's storytellers would visit each of our five partnering prisons several times throughout the year to model story-telling and offer tips on ways to make it fun and how to have conversations with their kids about books and stories. This year, we videotaped two such presentations and inmates have been able to watch them in small groups. At the end of each presentation, participants choose new books to send home to their kids, grandkids, or nieces and nephews. They write notes to their kids in the books they picked out just for them. It provides a line of communication between incarcerated family members and the kids in their lives, in addition to encouraging literacy skills in at-risk children.

Participating parents say:

*"CLiF is an amazing program! My three children love getting the books. It makes me feel a sense of pride that I can do something for them and it makes them feel like I haven't forgotten them... The storytellers that have presented inspire me to be a more engaged storyteller."*

*"My son loves and looks forward to receiving books from me. Thank you so much for everything you do to make it possible. The book reading tips have also been very helpful."*

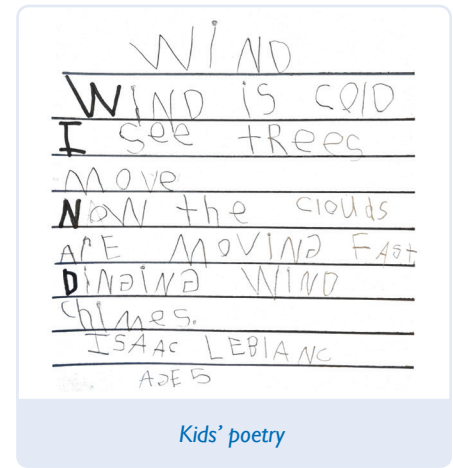
## Kids' Poetry

This Spring, we held a Kids' Poetry Contest open to kids 12 and under from all over New Hampshire and Vermont. We received dozens of wonderful poems from all ages and picking a winner for each category was not easy! Winners and runners up received new books.

Here are excerpts from the winning poems:

*When it gets dark you can build a campfire.  
As the grownups sit around the campfire talking,  
you and your friends can catch fireflies.  
When it's time for bed you can bring your  
fireflies home  
and put them on your bedside table, like a nightlight.*  
- Elise Menguc ("Vermont," Ages 7-8 Category)

*When the snow starts to melt,  
And the first sun is felt,  
Shed off coats, scarves, hats, and snow pants.  
Then head outside to see if, by chance,  
The crocuses are blooming,  
And in the field there are lambs.*  
- Eve Menguc ("In Honor of Vermont's 230th Birthday," Ages 9-10 Category)



Kids' poetry

*Alone together  
No longer tethered  
to old ways  
We have strength  
And strength  
Makes change*  
- Harmony Devoe ("Strong," Ages 11-12 Category)

We thank all the young poets who bravely shared their work with us. We enjoyed reading every single poem. Congratulations to the winners!



Kids in Richmond, VT celebrate summer with new books

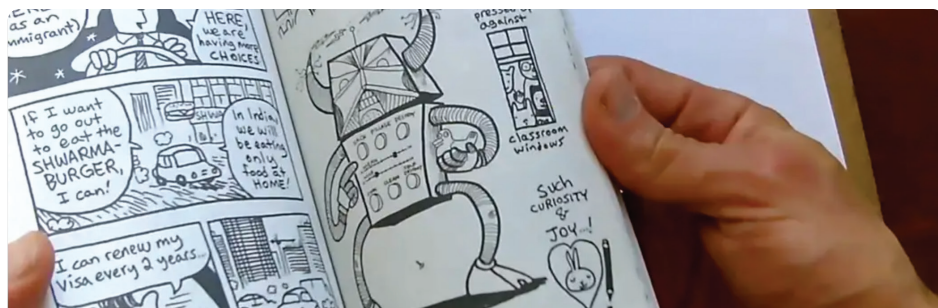
## "Books Provide a Safe Space" This Summer

After a challenging year for our partners, we are looking forward to helping kids set the screens aside, get outside, and dive into some new, exciting summer reading! Over summer vacation, CLiF's Summer Readers program will continue to offer updated virtual storytelling programs at the same time we get back to basics and offer our storytelling presentations and author visits outside, under a tree, on a playground, on the lawn at the local library, and at summer camps across New Hampshire and Vermont.

With the increased focus on summer enrichment programs this year, we hope to reach even more children and welcome new programs to the CLiF network. Rural and economically disadvantaged children in particular are at an increased risk for learning loss during the pandemic, and lack of access to high interest, new books, academic resources, and reliable internet pose additional challenges for some children. Literacy is a focal point for learning re-engagement as our school, library, and summer enrichment partners seek to provide quality learning opportunities this summer. Our professional authors, poets, storytellers, and illustrators offer literacy experiences that build community and promote a love of books. And we will be sending thousands of books home with (continued on p. 6)

# Annual Community Literacy Conference Goes Virtual

Every spring, more than 130 educators, librarians, and folks who work with young kids gather at Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, Vermont for CLiF's annual Community Literacy Conference. The conference typically includes a variety of experts and topics related to literacy and education and provides training and networking opportunities for schools awarded CLiF's Year of the Book program. It also provides tons of books! Scheduled for late March 2020, last year's conference, of course, had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, but this year we went virtual. The free Community Literacy Conference happened via Zoom on three Wednesday afternoon sessions March 10, 17, and 24. Sessions focused on incorporating nonfiction into the classroom with



Graphic novelist Marek Bennett leads a comics workshop at CLiF's virtual conference

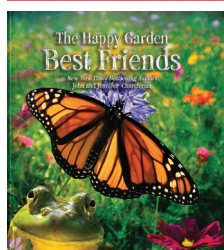
Professor Mary Ann Cappiello, cartooning with graphic novelist Marek Bennett, and writing prompts with Chris Tebbetts. In addition to these live online sessions, attendees also received a collection of new books! Participants said, "This was excellent. I brought many ideas back to my colleagues for use in the classroom" and "CLiF's in-person conferences

are always a source of inspiration and great networking opportunities each spring. Given that an in-person conference was not possible this year, I thought the chance to learn online from the presenters was an excellent option. The planning and preparation was well done, and the speakers were entertaining and informative; I can't ask for more in this COVID school year!"

## News from CLiF's Presenters

Ann Braden's new middle grade novel, *Flight of the Puffin*, was featured as a Penguin read-aloud book in the Spring of 2021. 750 classrooms across the country participated in the five-week read-aloud.

Storyteller Simon Brooks and graphic novelist Marek Bennett teamed up to record music and stories on the CD "A Flight of Stories."



John and Jennifer Churchman, Vermont farmers, have a new picture book in their *Sweet Pea & Friends* series, *The Happy Garden*.

True to the Churchmans' style, the book tells the story of animals on the farm with gorgeous illustrated photos.

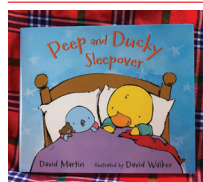
Sarah Dillard's new picture book, *Blueberry Cake*, will be released by Simon & Schuster in July 2021.

Matt Forrest Esenwine has three books published in 2021! His new board book is *Elliot the Heart-shaped Frog* and he

co-authored the picture book *Once Upon Another Time* with Charles Ghigna. *I Am Today* comes out in Fall 2021.

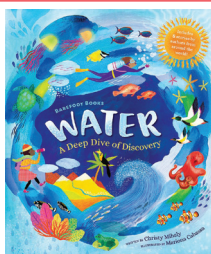
John Steven Gurney's graphic novel *Fuzzy Baseball 4: Di-NO Hitters* was released by Papercutz in June.

Author-illustrator Amy Huntington has two new books this year, *Monsters Like Us* and *Frankie Gets a Doggie* (August 2021).



David Walker, and *The More the Merrier*, illustrated by Raissa Figueroa.

Christy Mihaly's picture book *Water: A Deep Dive of Discovery*, illustrated by Mariona Cabassa, follows the water cycle and how we can protect it.



Verandah Porche is working with Art in the Neighborhood, writing poems and prompts for kids living in public housing.

Lindsey Stoddard's fourth middle grade novel, *Bea is for Blended*, was released in May. Kirkus called the book "charming and heartfelt."

(continued from p. 5)

children this summer so that new, exciting books are close at hand.

Jaffrey Public Library Director Julie Perrin of Jaffrey, NH says, "The pandemic has taken a heavy toll on our children, who have suffered loss on so many levels—from disrupted educational routines to being unable to hug their teachers and grandparents or play with their friends, to the overwhelming loss of parents and loved ones. They have been surrounded by anxiety in a world full of fear and grief. Whether facing a tender topic or reading for an escape, books provide a safe space for children and their families to be together and process the emotions of a tumultuous time. This year, summer reading not only helps to overcome literacy skills that may have been lost with disrupted education, it also offers children and their families a road to healing and a safe place to be."

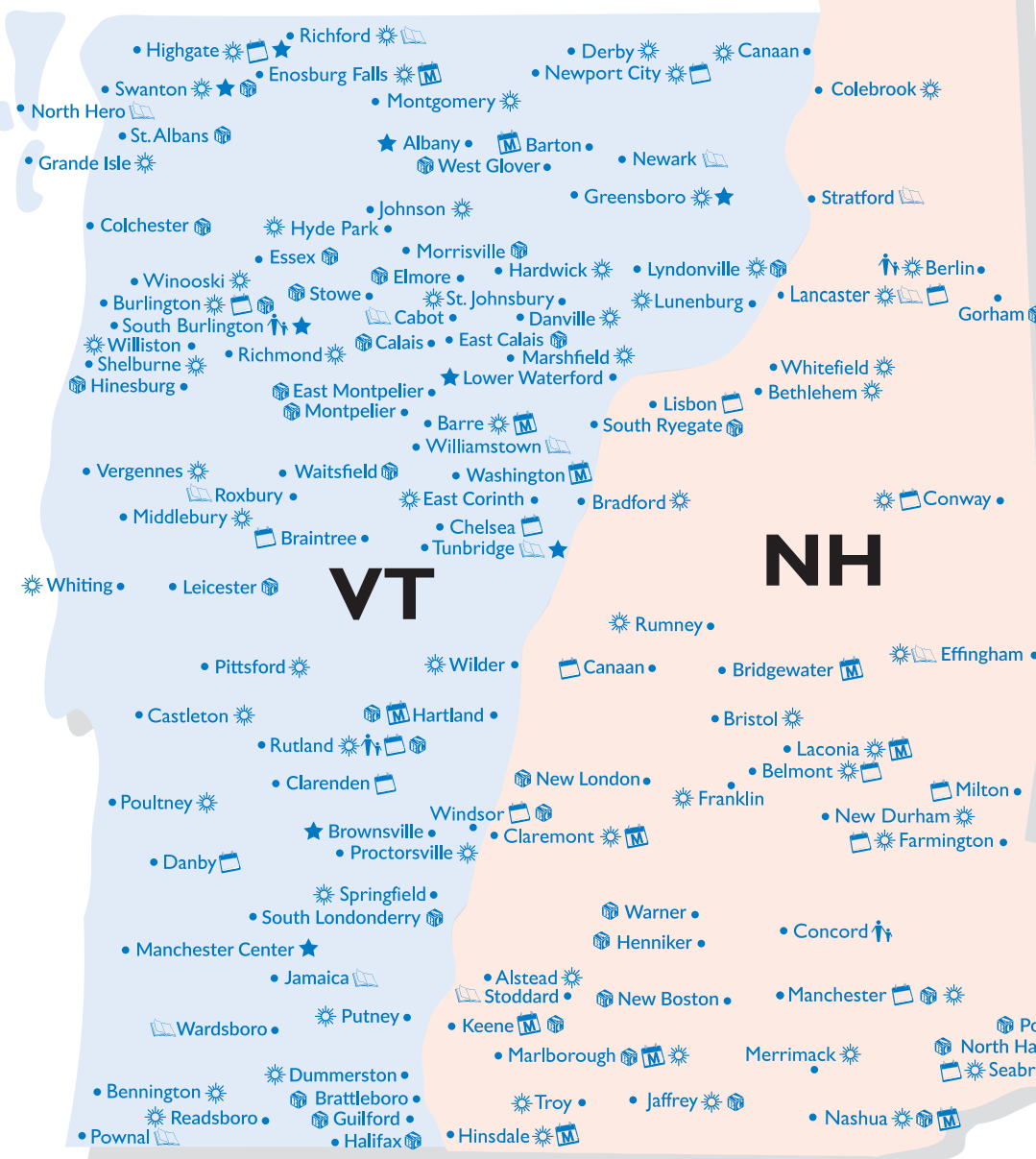
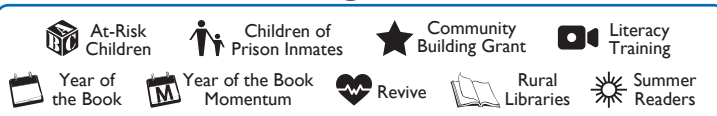


# CLiF Sponsorships (January – December 2021)

Since 1998 CLiF has served almost 350,000 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



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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*Note from a young reader and writer*

Dear clif organization,  
Thank you for all the books. I love  
reading. I got a baby mouse book. I love that  
series. I was inspired by your preitashion.  
So then umade me confident about my reading.

*A young reader in  
Burlington, VT with  
his new books*



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