

Inspiring a love of reading and writing among under-resourced children throughout New Hampshire and Vermont.
Opening books, opening minds, opening doors.

Hot Book Summer!



CLiF's Summer Readers program keeps books in kids' hands.

As the school year winds down, CLiF's Summer Readers program ramps up! Over the summer months, our energetic CLiF presenters will visit with thousands of children at events across Vermont and New Hampshire, sharing stories and hosting book giveaways.

Last year CLiF hosted 108 storytelling sessions for kids at risk of experiencing summer learning loss, and gave away over 18,000 brand-new books. Our goal is to serve even more young readers this summer, and to build enthusiasm around summer reading by providing a wide selection of books at each CLiF event for children to choose and keep.

In May, storyteller **Simon Brooks** hosted CLiF's first summer event for the NH Foster Parent Association's annual family celebration, which was held in person for the first time since 2019. After sharing stories, he invited children forward to choose books to keep.

"Each young person there stepped up to the four large tables exploding with the color of hundreds of brand new books," Brooks recalled. "Children eagerly picked over them, choosing two of their favorites, and talking about the books with their friends."

"Even though I do this work all year round, there's always something special, something magical about watching kids pick out books that don't need to be returned, books that they can write their name in, and, sometimes, begin a collection for the first time for their own library," he added.

We look forward to seeing the familiar faces of long standing CLiF partners this summer, as well as welcoming a cluster of new summer programs to the CLiF network! Together with our partners, we'll continue our mission to combat summer learning loss and keep kids throughout Vermont and New Hampshire engaged with reading during their time away from school.

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Make An Impact

In-person visits from authors and illustrators. Creative writing workshops. Family literacy events. And, of course, book giveaways! These are just a few of the initiatives supported by your gift to CLiF.

"Seeing the kids when they get that book that they get to choose, it's like a million bucks. It's a magical moment, when they go 'I get to keep this?' Yeah, it's yours."

— CLiF Year of the Book Program Coordinator

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Executive Director Laura Rice addresses guests at CLiF's 25th anniversary celebration.

CLiF's New Chapter

My first months at CLiF have been a wonderful whirlwind of edifying experiences and encounters. While my schedule is full, my lists long, and my questions many, upon pausing to consider, these are the reflections forefront on my mind:

First, my sincere gratitude to Duncan. His vision and dedication to CLiF is truly remarkable. It is not just what he did, but how he did it. Through his patented blend of courage and creativity, knowledge and kindness, Duncan impacted untold thousands of children throughout NH and VT. His mentorship and friendship are invaluable to me in this new role.

Second, the need for CLiF's continued work in our communities. We are all aware of the pandemic's impact on students' literacy scores, and recent reports suggest continued declines in children's overall enjoyment of reading. With youth mental health concerns on the rise, and exacerbated by reliance on screens and social media, our mission to spread the simple joys of reading and writing feels more important than ever.

Finally, the inspiring depth of the CLiF community. Volunteers who shelve and pack our books; presenters whose talents engage and encourage; community partners who prioritize our programs; staff who juggle countless tasks with grace; board members who provide wisdom and guidance; and donors who share resources and enthusiasm. I am amazed daily by how many people are committed to making CLiF's mission happen.

As we turn the page to CLiF's next chapter, we anticipate the many exciting plot twists still to come. Thank you for being part of our story.

 **Laura Rice**
CLiF Executive Director

Best Friend Books

Do you have a favorite book you return to time and time again? Maybe it's a picture book or a cherished chapter book, and as you rely on a best friend, you can rely on these books for their wisdom, substance, and support.

This is the concept behind education consultant **Lester L. Laminack's** workshop, "When Books Become Best Friends: One Book/Many Visits," one of three engaging literacy sessions presented during CLiF's free annual Community Literacy Conference in March 2023.

Laminack defines a "best friend book" as one in a mindfully chosen collection that educators and caregivers return to over and over to teach specific concepts.

When first introducing students to a "best friend book," he emphasizes the importance of reading aloud without interruption as a "gift to the listeners." That means simply letting listeners absorb the story, without front-loading, pre-teaching or stopping for questions.

Subsequent readings will allow for deeper analysis and learning, as the "friendship" between book and listener develops, and the listener's comprehension of the material grows.

"Perhaps the most important message that comes from our reading aloud to [children] is one that says you are worth the time this will take.

When a teacher reads aloud, it is a bonding between the teacher, the children, the books, and the act of reading. That in itself is worthy."

- Lester L. Laminack



Lester L. Laminack, one of the presenters at CLiF's 2023 Community Literacy Conference.



Duncan McDougall chats with guests at CLiF's 25th anniversary celebration.

Literacy through Songwriting

CLiF presenters use many creative techniques to connect with children through literacy, songwriting among them. Vermont-based musician and CLiF presenter **Jon Gailmor** guides students through writing and performing original songs, believing songwriting helps tease out inner stories. He describes it as a collaborative process, where “fledgling songwriters brainstorm, listen to each other’s ideas, appreciate their classmates’ perspectives, and end up with a collective piece of beauty.”

Gailmor says literacy principles are embedded throughout the songwriting experience.

“The emphasis is on vivid writing, so the listener can picture what the composers are singing about. Discovering the magic of our language is a revelation for the children, which becomes a skill to enhance their lives forever.”

Students—whether in preschool or middle school—learn to use the best words in order to make their compositions become lyrics. They also learn about rhyme, rhythm, phonetics (sounds), emotions, and word meaning. Gailmor maintains that children naturally like to make up songs; we just need to encourage curiosity and let them lead the way. Ultimately, it’s about joy and expression and helping children find what Gailmor sings in one of his songs, “the power of the word in my brain and soul.”



CLiF presenter Jon Gailmor with kindergarten students at Hardwick Elementary School.

CLiF’s Big Night

On a warm April night, some 250 friends of CLiF gathered at the Hanover Inn (Hanover, NH) to celebrate the organization’s 25th anniversary; bid farewell to retiring Executive Director **Duncan McDougall**; and welcome new Executive Director **Laura Rice**.

The night’s speakers included CLiF Board Chair **Mark Beams** and Vice Chair **Posie Taylor**; **Leah Whelan**, principal of Canaan (NH) Elementary School, a 2022-2023 CLiF Year of the Book partner; Laura and Duncan. Additional CLiF “VIPs” were featured in a video montage honoring Duncan.

In recognition of Duncan’s unwavering commitment to the well-being of his staff over the years, the Board also announced the creation of the **Duncan McDougall Staff Development & Enrichment Fund**, intended to provide CLiF staffers with expanded professional development and wellness opportunities.

Apart from a 4-year-old guest’s constructive criticism regarding the venue’s lack of bounce houses, the gathering was deemed a rousing success by all who attended.

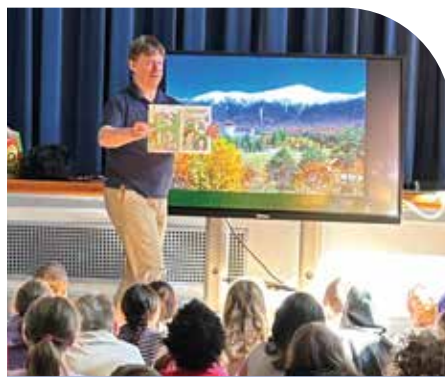
A Mountaintop Finale

To cap off their 2022-23 CLiF Year of the Book grant, Bethlehem (NH) Elementary School launched a reading challenge with an enticing reward. “Read to the Top of the Cog!” tracked students’ literary successes, and culminated with a momentous schoolwide trip to the summit of Mount Washington via the Cog Railway.

In keeping with the theme, CLiF presenter **Eric Pinder** visited the school to discuss his book *Cat in the Clouds*, inspired by his time working as a weather observer atop Mount Washington. Principal **Sue Greenlaw** said the visit added another layer of excitement to the field trip, while connecting it with literacy.

“I think being able to connect the power of reading and writing to a special opportunity like this solidifies the connection for kids,” Greenlaw said. “Becoming lifelong readers is our goal for our students and this will certainly support that goal.”

Kudos to the educators who provided these students with an unforgettable experience, while teaching about the power of community, reading and a special local mountain.



CLiF presenter Eric Pinder visits Bethlehem Elementary School in NH.



The CLiF team at the entrance to the new office. From left: Laura, Cassie, Jana, Mary Edith, Sarah, Kat.

Please Note Our Change of Address

CLiF officially has a new home! After 25 years of operation out of founder **Duncan McDougall's** garage, we moved to our new headquarters in Waterbury Center, VT this April. Located just two miles away from our former site, it feels like a new world of opportunities has been opened to our organization.

During the design/build process, careful consideration went into making our new building as environmentally friendly as possible.

"Everyone at CLiF cares very deeply about the well-being of children, and that extends to the kind of world we will be leaving them," Duncan explained. "Climate change will have a significant impact on future

generations, and when designing the new CLiF Headquarters we wanted to reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible."

According to **Jesse Remick**, project manager at Black River Design in Montpelier, VT, CLiF HQ was "designed with an eye toward the future with its energy use. The building is 100 percent fossil fuel-free with goals of becoming net zero."

It is anticipated that a solar array installed on the roof of the building will produce enough power to offset CLiF's electrical usage, including hot water, heating, air conditioning, ventilation and two electric vehicle charging stations.

"It will take a full year of our lovely seasons in Vermont to see how the solar electrical

production matches the usage of the building, but by this time next year we hope to call the building net zero," Remick said.

Our thanks to the many people who helped bring this dream to life. We are grateful to our architects at **Black River Design**; and our builders at **Naylor & Breen**, who have been with us on each step of this journey. Special thanks to the members of our Building Committee and Building Campaign Committee, particularly **John Vogel**, **Posie Taylor** and **Kathy McGowan** for their hard work and leadership. Thank you to **Trevor Luce** for consulting on and setting up our technology. And, our deepest gratitude to **Duncan** for spearheading efforts on all fronts with his signature optimism and dedication.

Two-Sentence Tales

In February, CLiF held its first-ever Two-Sentence Writing Contest, challenging entrants to tell an original story about winter using only—you guessed it—two sentences. Open to all Vermont and New Hampshire children aged 12 and under, it was free to enter, with prizes for top entries.

We were thrilled to receive **763 entries** from kids across the Twin States. Seventeen different schools sent in submissions, as did many homeschoolers, public librarians, parents, grandparents and guardians.

Though brief in length, the stories were long on creativity. Entries were separated into three age groups: 6 and under, 7 to 9 years, and 10 to 12 years. Our winners received a five-book library, curated according to their interests, while runners-up each received one book.

We are grateful to CLiF presenter **Jason Chin** for recording a congratulatory video message for all entrants; and to CLiF presenter **Simon Brooks**, who created audio recordings of our winning entries.

Plans are already in the works for next year's Two-Sentence Contest. Stay tuned!



Six-year-old Riley of Farmington, NH was the winner in her age group.





Incoming Board members (left to right) Jeremy Harrington, Caroline Kerr, and Mary Margaret Sloan.

Changes to CLiF's Board

CLiF is pleased to welcome three new members to our Board: **Jeremy Harrington, S. Caroline Kerr** and **Mary Margaret Sloan**.

Jeremy grew up in upstate New York, and attended the University of New England where he received a BS in marine biology. He went on to earn an MBA from Champlain College. Jeremy works as a data analyst on the finance team for Ben & Jerry's, where he has worked since 2012. In his free time, Jeremy enjoys gardening, fishing, and going on adventures with his kids. He lives in Barre, VT with his wife and two children.

Caroline is an education leader and strategist who helps build and grow mission-driven organizations. She previously served as CEO of the Joyce Ivy Foundation, a nonprofit that broadens the college aspirations and leadership development of talented young women. Caroline was born in Vermont, grew up in Michigan and upstate New York, and is a graduate of Dartmouth and Harvard. She has served on multiple boards, including the Dartmouth Board of Trustees, and several organizations that serve Upper Valley youth. Caroline, her wife, three children, and rescue pup, Onyx, enjoy adventures in the woods and water.

Mary Margaret has 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience with mission-driven organizations. She was previously the chief operating officer for Positive Tracks, a Hanover, NH-based organization that equips young people with the resources to change the world through physical activity. She also served as the executive director of Vital Communities, an Upper Valley nonprofit dedicated to creating equitable solutions to the region's challenges. She and her husband live on an historic farm in Woodstock, VT, at the site of the first ski rope tow in the country.

CLiF also bids grateful goodbyes to outgoing Board members **Katie Robbins** and **Leslie Williams**, who have contributed much time, knowledge and camaraderie to the organization. Thank you, Katie and Leslie—you'll be missed!



Outgoing Board members Katie Robbins (left) and Leslie Williamson.



James Ransome's visit was supported by CLiF's Community Building Grant.

Building Community Through Literacy

CLiF created the annual Community Building grant in response to the division and discord experienced by the country following the 2016 election. The grant uses reading and writing to bring people together, while sparking engagement within communities.

Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, VT was one of five sites awarded the \$1,000 grant this spring. The library recently hosted "Telling a People's Story: African-American Children's Literature," a traveling 12-panel exhibit of illustrations from African-American children's picture books, along with a robust schedule of related events. The CLiF grant helped support a visit from **James Ransome**, an acclaimed author and illustrator of over 70 books, who delivered an all-ages talk for the general public, as well as special presentations for students from area schools.

While speaking with students, Ransome, the winner of the 2023 Children's Literacy Legacy Award, shared personal insights into his creative process, and revealed that his literary inspirations as a child included comic books and *Mad Magazine*.

In connection with the event, Fletcher Free Library raised funds to purchase a selection of books by Black authors and illustrators for students to choose and keep.

CLiF was thrilled to support this community event spotlighting the important topics of representation and diversity in the children's book world.



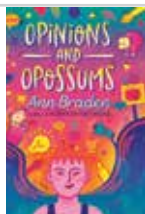
Author/illustrator James Ransome.

News from CLiF's Presenters

Updates from some of the authors, illustrators, poets and storytellers who present on CLiF's behalf

Amy Huntington spent two weeks at GeoCamp with 20+ science teachers, learning about different geological processes.

Ann Braden's "funny, fast-paced" book, *Opinions and Opossums*, recently came out from Penguin Random House.



Christy Mihaly was one of 11 authors invited to the Children's Literature Festival in Missouri in April. Her next civics-themed picture book comes out next year.

Big Time Trouble, the fifth book in **Dan Abdo** and **Jason Patterson's** Blue, Barry & Pancakes series was published in January. *Barb and the Battle for Bailiwick*, the third book in their Barb the Last Berzerker series, is due in August.



Coming soon: **Gina Perry's** kid-sized drawing books *Let's Draw Dinosaurs* and *Let's Draw Magical Creatures* are filled with how-to-draw and creative prompts.

Jason Chin's latest book, *The Universe in You: A Microscopic Journey*, introduces readers to the very smallest things known to science and the building blocks of matter and life.

An exhibit of **Jim Arnosky's** illustrations is currently on display at the University of Findlay's Mazza Museum in Ohio.



Congratulations to **Jo Knowles**, whose book *Meant to Be* was a finalist for the 2022 Vermont Book Award for children's literature.

Fuzzy Baseball Vol # 5: Fuzzy BaseBALLoween, the latest in **John Steven Gurney's** humorous graphic novel series, comes out July 18.



Karen Gross received a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for her work on trauma art and communities. Her children's book, *Dr. Sgro Decorates a Cake*, is due in September.

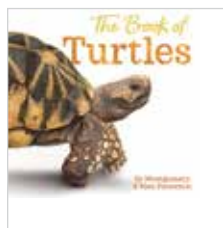
Matt Forrest Esenwine's newest picture book, *Everybody Counts*, came out in January.



Rajni Eddins is host of The Poetry Experience, a writing/sharing circle, and curator of the "Black Is Beautiful" film series, both held at Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, VT.

Rick Agran celebrated National Poetry Month (April) by leading the PoemCity Moveable Feast poetry parade in Montpelier.

Steve Swinburne is excited to have two new books coming out this August: *Giraffe Math* and *Big Truck Super Wash*.



The Book of Turtles is the latest book from National Book Award finalist and *New York Times* bestselling author **Sy Montgomery**.

Terry Farish recently traveled to Vietnam, where her next YA novel is set.



The sticker designed and produced for CLiF by Websticker

All Partnered Up

CLiF is always seeking new community partners. Here are a few of our recent and upcoming partnerships:

Websticker, Stowe, VT:

Websticker graciously awarded CLiF a fully funded sticker campaign through their Freely Fund grant for nonprofits. We highly recommend them for all your sticker needs!

VTDigger, Burlington, VT:

During VTDigger's spring member drive, each donation was matched with a gift of a book to a local child through CLiF.

Bookstock, Woodstock, VT:

On June 24, CLiF will sponsor an author event by **Natalie Kinsey-Warnock** at the Woodstock History Center as part of the free Bookstock Festival of Words.

Naylor & Breen Builders, Brandon, VT:

The leading Vermont builders behind our new HQ kindly invited CLiF to be the beneficiary of the 7th annual Naylor & Breen Golf Open in August.

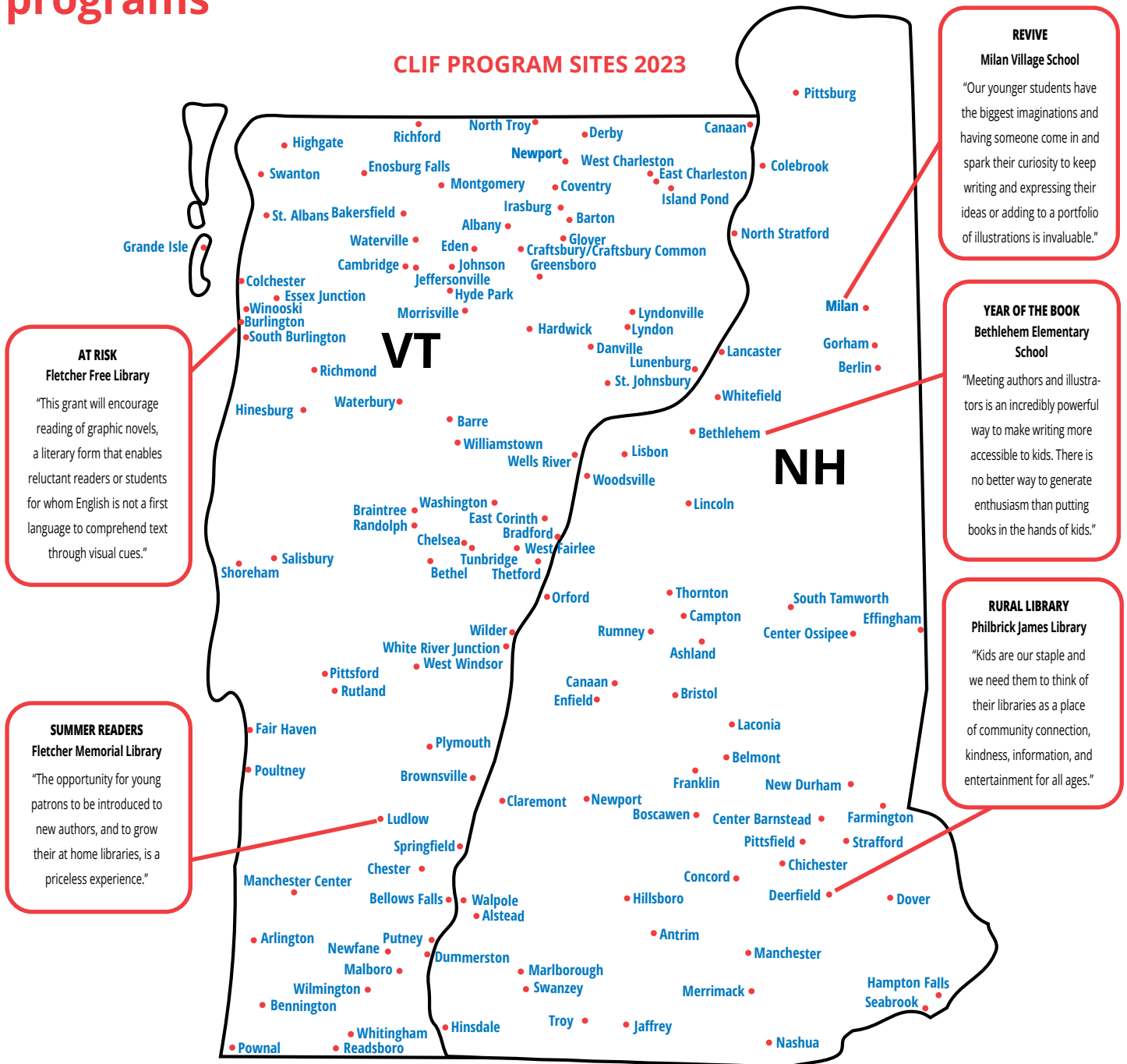
Do you have an idea for a potential CLiF partnership? Please email info@clifonline.org.



CLiF presenter Jim Arnosky leads a Year of the Book event at Enfield (NH) Village School.

map of CLiF programs

This map indicates towns receiving free CLiF programming through one of our eight grants in 2023. Every year, CLiF partners with educators, librarians, counselors, social workers, and many others at sites across the Twin States, collaborating on the shared goal of inspiring children to find joy in literacy.



<p>At Risk Storytelling presentations, on-site libraries, parent seminars and book giveaways for partnering organizations</p>	<p>Children of Incarcerated Adults Literacy seminars, family events, and books for incarcerated adults to share with their kids</p>	<p>CLiF Year of the Book \$25K in literacy programming, in-person author visits and new books for public elementary schools in VT and NH</p>	<p>Community Building This grant supports partners seeking to strengthen relationships within communities through literacy.</p>
<p>Momentum Additional literacy support following Year of the Book</p>	<p>Revive Additional literacy support for past CLiF partners</p>	<p>Rural Library Storytelling presentations and new books for rural public libraries and their local elementary school</p>	<p>Summer Readers Storytelling presentations and book giveaways for summer programs serving kids in VT and NH</p>





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“A book is a dream that
you hold in your hands.”

- Neil Gaiman



CLiF has more stories to share! Scan the QR code to receive our monthly updates in your inbox.

