

CLiF News

WINTER 2024



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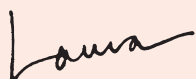
Dear Friends,

As CLiF moves into a new chapter following a period of transition, I was recently asked about my vision for our organization's future, both immediate and in the longer term. What I find myself mulling most is **how to nurture CLiF's most important and long standing components, while also allowing space for new energy and opportunities.** From programming to communications, the CLiF team is thoughtfully considering how to navigate this important balance. A few examples to share:

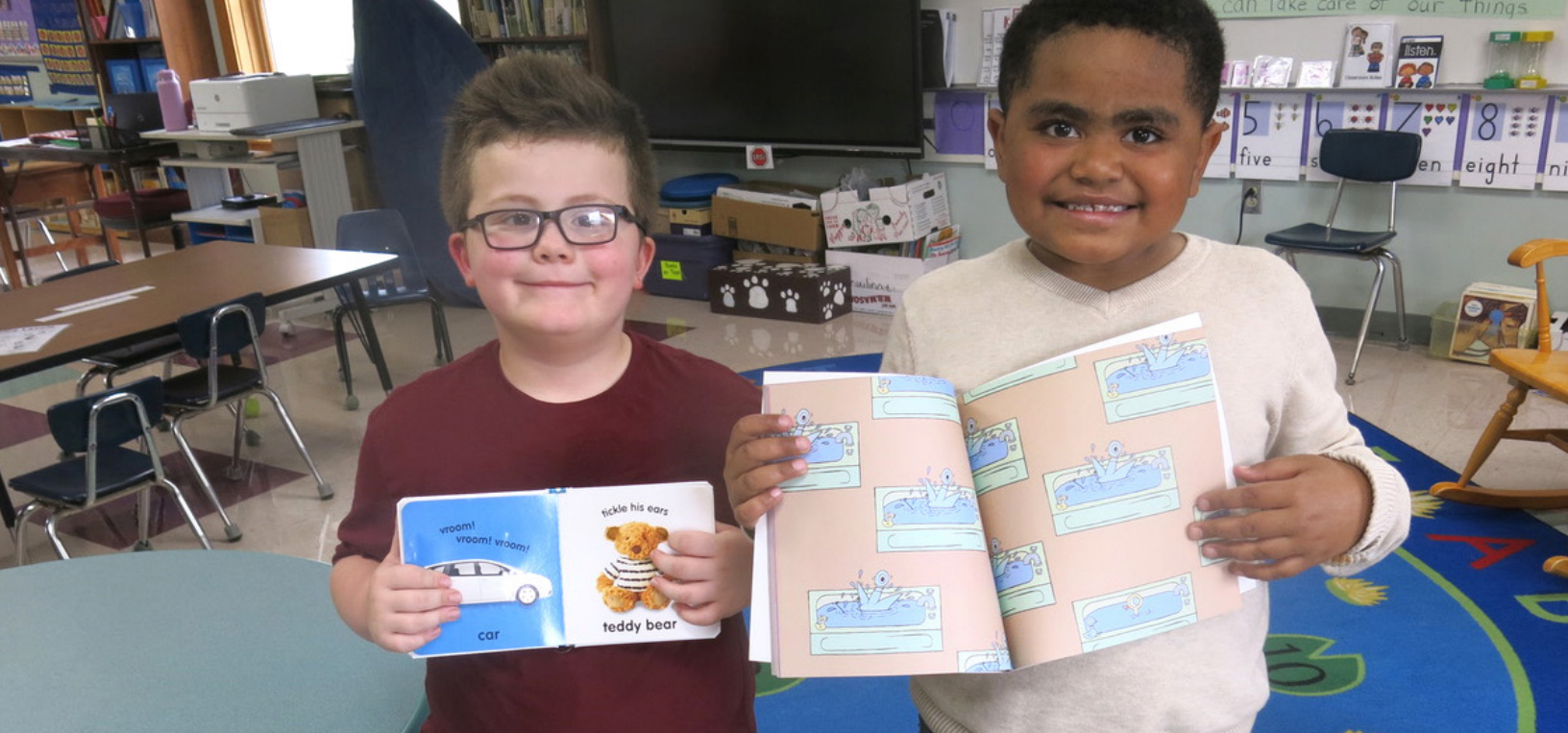
- Earlier this month, we announced CLiF's new **Literacy Enrichment Grant**, a program we will offer for the first time in Spring 2024. With an emphasis on experiential and project-based learning, this grant will further support the many creative ways that educators, librarians, and others connect literacy with outdoor experiences, hands-on projects, and community adventures. You can read more about the Literacy Enrichment grant, as well as a few other tweaks to our programming on page 6 of this newsletter.
- In April, we'll celebrate the return of the **CLiF Community Literacy Conference** as an in-person event! This popular professional development opportunity has been held virtually since the start of the pandemic, and we are delighted to be able to gather face-to-face once more. We've lined up a spectacular keynote speaker (award-winning author **Kekla Magoon**) and a strong set of panel presentations, and look forward to seeing many of our community partners there! Look for more information coming soon on our website.
- You may notice some changes to our print publications' design and content as we continue to evolve how we share news and updates with the CLiF community. We hope you enjoy the refreshed look of this winter newsletter! Additionally, stay tuned for an exciting new video project we have in the works.

In 2024, CLiF will embark upon our next strategic planning process. Completed every three years, this exercise allows us to dig deeper into what we sustain and what we shift based on the needs of our community partners, and the maturing of our organization. Of course, our commitment to increasing access to books and literacy experiences for under-resourced children will remain unchanged, as will our gratitude for the support and perspectives of our communities.

I always appreciate your observations, reflections, and ideas, and encourage you to reach out to me at laura@clifonline.org. I look forward to hearing from you!



Laura Rice
CLiF Executive Director



The CLiF Ripple Effect

As a lifelong learner, I delight in learning alongside my students, sharing their energy, and helping them make connections to their lives. **My passion for literacy and putting the right book in every child's hands energizes me.**

Being awarded the CLiF Year of the Book grant in 2019-20 in Enosburg, where I was the school librarian prior to Swanton, felt like my most satisfying educational achievement other than earning my Master's degree in literacy. When I joined Swanton Elementary School, I met two colleagues who were also YOB recipients at prior schools. We knew firsthand the possibilities of the grant and wanted to help make a difference in this deserving community by bringing Year of the Book to our school.



CLiF presenter Rajnii Eddins, Joanne Allen, and CLiF program manager Cassie Willner.

Upon notification that Swanton had been chosen as a Year of the Book grant recipient for 2023-24, I was overjoyed, weaving in and out of classrooms heralding the great news. Partnering with CLiF to bring books into homes, storytellers and authors into school, excitement and engagement to facilitate learning, and the joy for reading and writing truly matters to me.

This grant is making an immense difference by opening books, opening minds, and opening doors in our classrooms, homes, and community. We are deeply grateful to our generous sponsors who have provided this community with unparalleled opportunities to empower our students and help them create lifelong memories.

Guest contributor Joanne Allen is the school librarian and Year of the Book coordinator at Swanton Elementary School in Swanton, VT.



Swanton Elementary School students strike a pose with their new books.



Out and about with CLiF

As usual, CLiF covered a lot of territory this year, hosting hundreds of in-person author events, literacy workshops, and ever-popular book giveaways at sites across Vermont and New Hampshire. We're forever in awe of the talented CLiF presenters who share their passion for literacy with student audiences, and of the many educators, librarians, and facilitators who help coordinate our programming. Most of all, we're grateful to the young readers whose energy and excitement around books and stories constantly reminds us why we do what we do!

PRESENTER SPOTLIGHT

Cultivating Creativity with Marty Kelley

Longtime CLiF presenter **Marty Kelley** was inspired to become an author-illustrator after deciding he wanted to spend his time doing something he truly loved. "I love writing stories. I adore creating art," he said. **"I'm still amazed that I can make a living doing something that brings me so much joy."** As a former classroom teacher, Marty is dedicated to sharing his "passion for writing and creating art with as many kids as possible." While giving CLiF presentations at schools in his home state of New Hampshire this fall, he revealed some of his favorite tried-and-true tips for inspiring maximum creativity:

- **Take time to play.**
- **When writing and creating, ask yourself, "What if?"**
- **Fail.**
- **Ask yourself, "How can I make this better?"**
- **Be curious!**

For Marty, the best part of sharing stories with kids is when he succeeds in making them burst into laughter.



A purple-mohawked Marty Kelley with students at a Year of the Book kick-off event.

"I enjoy funny stories. I love it when stories make kids laugh really hard. Who doesn't love a good laugh?"

Special delivery: Books for the holidays!

CLiF's **Children of Incarcerated Adults (ChIA)** programming was in full swing in November and December. CLiF presenters visited all five of our correctional facility partners in Vermont and New Hampshire to host literacy discussions and book giveaways for incarcerated parents and relatives. These visits include storytelling demonstrations and interactive discussions about how to connect with children through books during in-person and video visits, and when back in the home.

Seminar participants also choose books to inscribe with personal messages and send home to children. One inscription on a copy of *The Hunger Games* read: "I love this book and the movies are even better so I hope you read this and learn to love reading." A board book of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* contained the message: "To my little caterpillar, I love you and your Mom." Receiving these special book packages is exciting and meaningful for the children served by the ChIA program, especially around the holidays when physical separation from their loved ones can be extra challenging.



Sharing a story at Pittsburg (NH) Elementary School's family literacy event.

Family Literacy Events

Coming out of the pandemic, CLiF has seen a surge in requests for family literacy events. In our current **Year of the Book** grant cohort, 11 out of 12 schools have elected to include an optional family literacy event on their programming schedule.

These special events offer an opportunity for children, parents and caregivers to gather as a community for a fun, book-focused event, and often to share a meal together. A CLiF presenter speaks about the importance of reading together at home, and offers read-aloud strategies for parents and caregivers who may not be strong readers themselves. At the close of the event, children choose new books to keep.

One program coordinator told CLiF that she found a recent family event "really encouraging."

"So many families showed up and there were some really thoughtful discussions families had with their kids while picking out books."



Incarcerated men choose books for their children from a variety of titles.

Rural Library Conference Goes Virtual

Every other year, CLiF offers its **Rural Library Conference**, a free learning opportunity for librarians and partners who work in small communities across VT and NH. With the aim of lowering barriers to participation, this conference is held online to make it as easy to attend as possible.

For our November 2023 conference, participants selected from three shorter workshops featuring panels of librarians speaking on early childhood literacy, inclusive library services for youth, and youth programming ideas and engagement.

Author-educator **Megan Dowd Lambert** led the keynote workshop on the "Whole Book Approach," an interactive storytime model focused on the art and design of the picture book, which she developed in association with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art.

Save the date for our next professional development opportunity, the **Community Literacy Conference** on April 12, 2024 at the Lake Morey Resort.

All are welcome!

Back at CLiF

In April 2023, CLiF moved to our brand-new headquarters, and proceeded to hit the ground running. Our expanded space allowed us to host our first-ever community event for our Waterbury neighbors, as well as an open house event for the many generous people who supported our building campaign. We were able to hire a finance coordinator (welcome, **Samantha Kelly!**), broadening our team's capabilities. Here's a peek at some of what else is going on behind the scenes at CLiF.

GRANT UPDATES

The Literacy Enrichment Grant is a new and flexible grant program designed to make reading and writing come alive for kids by infusing literacy with fun and adventure. This grant offers up to \$1000 in funding toward project-oriented or experiential learning opportunities that help create excitement around literacy.

The Spark Grant (formerly known as "Revive") provides \$500 to past CLiF partners to help them spark enthusiasm for reading and writing with options including an in-person author/illustrator visit, books, or school-wide projects.

The Community Literacy Grant (formerly known as "At Risk Children") aims to connect with local community partners serving children in Vermont and New Hampshire who are at increased risk of growing up with low literacy skills.

Learn more about our grant opportunities and eligibility requirements at clifonline.org.



CLiF COLLABORATORS



Meet CLiF's Volunteer Tech Guru

When **Trevor Luce** heard that CLiF was seeking IT help, "I offered up my services right away," he recalled. That was a decade ago. Today, the Waterbury Center-based software engineer remains CLiF's de facto tech guru, patiently lending his expertise to solve the organization's digital dilemmas and software snafus. During the construction of CLiF's new headquarters, he masterminded the building's tech infrastructure, a process he described as "long, but really fun."

Trevor credits his grandmother and longtime CLiF volunteer **Margaret Luce** with first introducing him to the foundation's mission, which instantly resonated. "Getting kids excited about literacy is such a novel approach to solving many different problems," he said.

To learn more about Trevor, including his most memorable CLiF tech mishap, visit clifonline.org/meet-trevor.



Lights, Camera, Literacy!

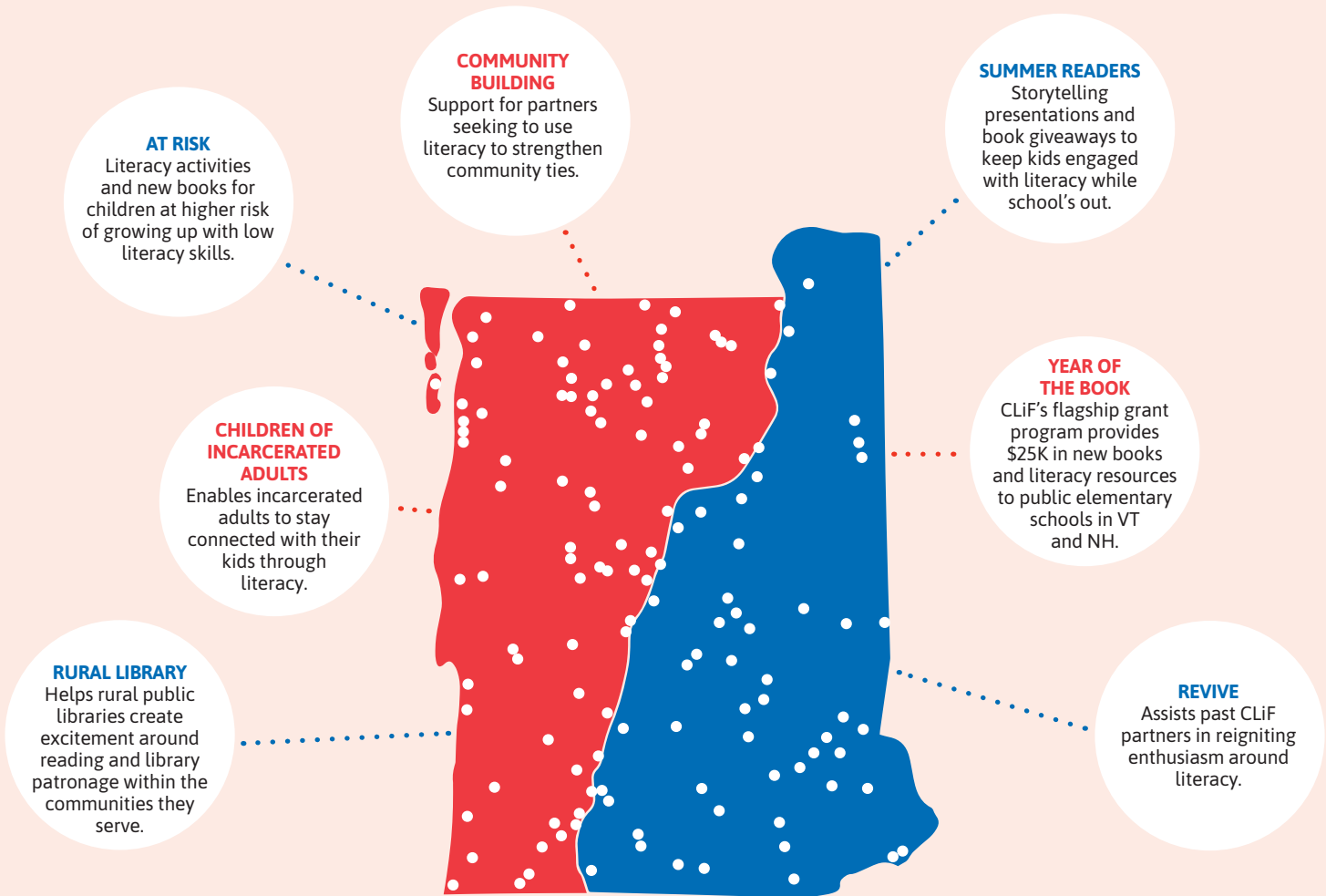
CLiF is currently working with filmmaker **Jeff Harasimowicz** on a new video illustrating our mission. Jeff is the

founder of Raised by Wolves Media, and lives in Waterbury with his wife and young children. Recognizing the importance of books in his own kids' lives, Jeff reached out to CLiF to propose a collaboration.

"I'm very excited about this project, which will showcase the amazing work CLiF does for kids in our communities"

Programs across VT and NH

Each year, CLiF partners with sites throughout the Twin States on the goal of inspiring under-resourced children to find joy in literacy. This map illustrates the locations our free grant programs reached in 2023. (See page 6 for some changes to our grants in 2024.)



VERMONT

Albany	Dummerston	Lyndonville	Springfield
Arlington	East Charleston	Manchester Center	Springfield
Bakersfield	East Corinth	Marlboro	St. Albans
Barre	Eden	Montgomery	St. Johnsbury
Barton	Enosburg Falls	Morrisville	Swanton
Bellows Falls	Essex Junction	Newfane	Thetford
Bennington	Fair Haven	Newport	Tunbridge
Bethel	Glover	North Troy	Washington
Bradford	Grand Isle	Pittsford	Waterbury
Braintree	Greensboro	Plymouth	Waterville
Brownsville	Hardwick	Poultney	Wells River
Burlington	Highgate	Pownal	West Charleston
Cambridge	Hinesburg	Putney	West Fairlee
Canaan	Hyde Park	Randolph	West Windsor
Chelsea	Irasburg	Readsboro	White River Junction
Chester	Island Pond	Richford	Whitingham
Colchester	Jeffersonville	Richmond	Wilder
Coventry	Jeffersonville	Rutland	Williamstown
Craftsbury	Johnson	Saint Johnsbury	Wilmington
Craftsbury Common	Ludlow	Salisbury	Winooski
Danville	Lunenburg	Shoreham	
Derby	Lyndon	South Burlington	

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Alstead	Gorham	South Tamworth
Antrim	Hampton Falls	Strafford
Ashland	Hillsboro	Swansey
Belmont	Hinsdale	Thornton
Berlin	Jaffrey	Troy
Bethlehem	Laconia	Walpole
Boscawen	Lancaster	Whitefield
Bristol	Lincoln	Woodsville
Campton	Lisbon	Whitefield
Canaan	Manchester	
Center Barnstead	Marlborough	
Center Ossipee	Merrimack	
Chichester	Milan	
Claremont	Nashua	
Colebrook	New Durham	
Concord	Newport	
Deerfield	North Stratford	
Dover	Orford	
Effingham	Pittsburg	
Enfield	Pittsfield	
Farmington	Rumney	
Franklin	Seabrook	



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Why they give:

Bruce Hauben and **Joyce Brinton** are longtime CLIF donors through the Helen G. Hauben Foundation (named in honor of Bruce's late mother), which supports programs and education for underserved youth, among other initiatives.

"CLIF is a superb match with the HGHF's focus on bringing reading and books to diverse populations of kids," Bruce says. "Getting kids started reading at an early age is the best way to instill the necessity and enjoyment of reading throughout one's life. **The earlier kids can get exposed to reading, the better, and the more likely it is to stick throughout their lives.** Reading also opens up doors to new possibilities in life that might have never been thought about."