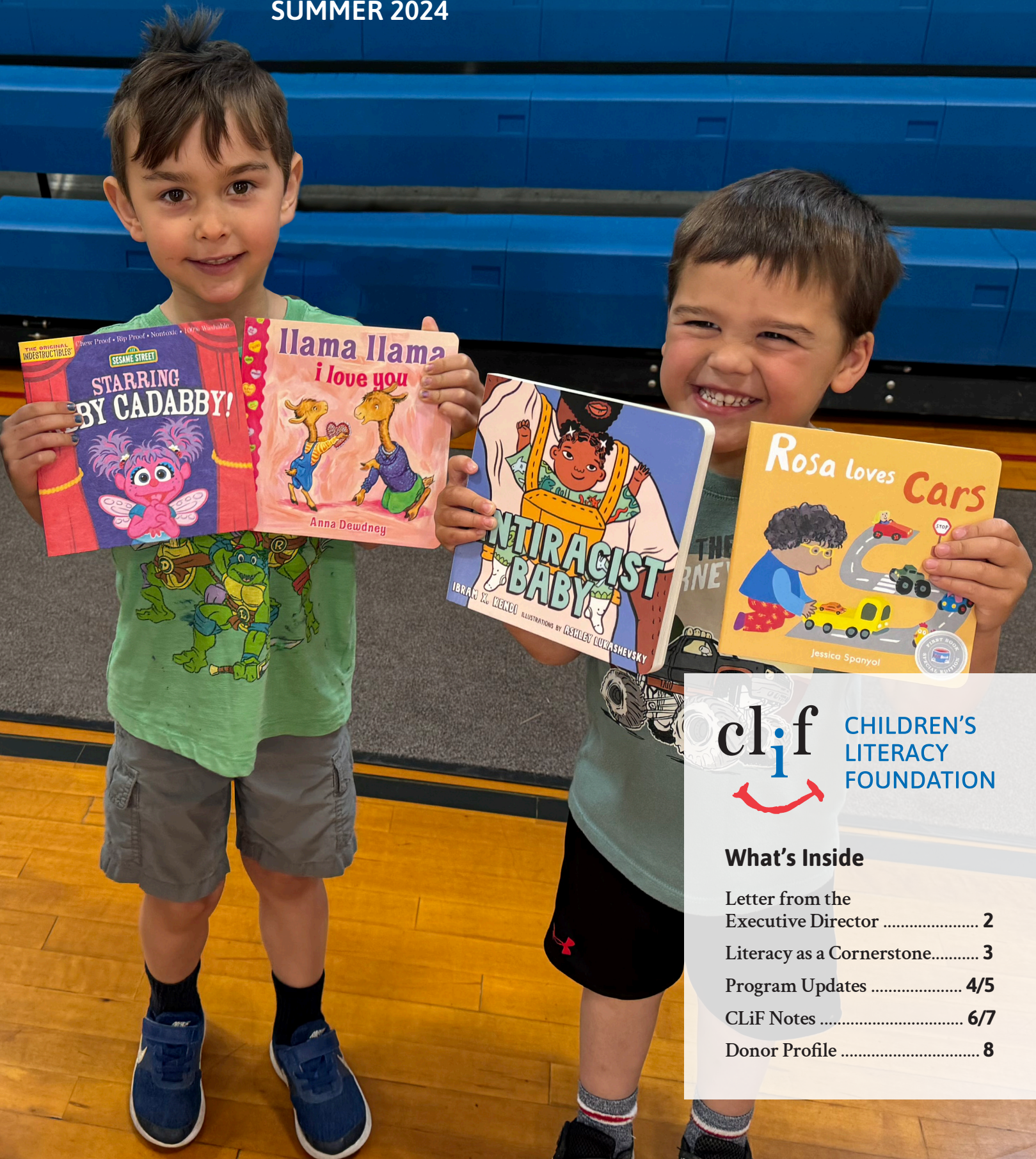


CLiF News

SUMMER 2024



CHILDREN'S
LITERACY
FOUNDATION

What's Inside

Letter from the Executive Director	2
Literacy as a Cornerstone.....	3
Program Updates	4/5
CLiF Notes	6/7
Donor Profile	8

STAFF:

Laura Rice
Executive Director
Jana Brown
Program Manager
Sarah Hall
Communications Manager
Samantha Kelly
Finance Coordinator
Kat Lane
Development/Data Manager
Mary Edith Leichter
Project Specialist
Cassie Willner
Program Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Mark Beams • Chair
Posie Taylor • Vice Chair
Zach Haggerty • Secretary
John Vogel • Treasurer

Lisa Ferneau
Jeremy Harrington
Dr. Sandy Kelsey
S. Caroline Kerr
Kathy McGowan
Rick Mills
Dr. Blanche Podhajski
Mary Margaret Sloan

BOARD OF ADVISORS:

Mary Ann Capiello
Jonathan Clark
Deborah Dutcher
Toni Eubanks
Jess Kell
Jane Knight
Jen Kusnarowis
Julia Rogers
Rubi Simon
Michele Tine

CONTACT:

Children's Literacy Foundation
3579 Waterbury-Stowe Road
Waterbury Center, VT 05677

802-244-0944
info@clifonline.org
www.clifonline.org
f @cliforg i @clifonline

*Dear Friends,*

This past April, we held CLiF's annual Community Literacy Conference in person for the first time in four years, having pivoted to a virtual event during the pandemic. It was such an invigorating day, packed with excellent presentations, dynamic conversations, and meaningful connections. The energy and enthusiasm generated by gathering face-to-face simply cannot be replicated over Zoom.

In speaking with our attendees, a common theme became clear: despite the many challenges they may face, they remain unwavering in their passion for teaching, and their commitment to helping children learn. Over the course of the day, I was repeatedly impressed and inspired by the sharing of ideas, encouragement and empathy I witnessed between individuals at various stages of their careers.

Teachers, librarians, and many others who work with youth provide the leadership and compassion that our children need for a healthy future. CLiF is honored to partner with such committed, creative, and thoughtful people.

By supporting CLiF, you join us in admiration and appreciation for these dedicated stewards of our next generation. To all who have chosen this important work, know that we are grateful.

Thank you for being part of the CLiF community.

Laura Rice
CLiF Executive Director



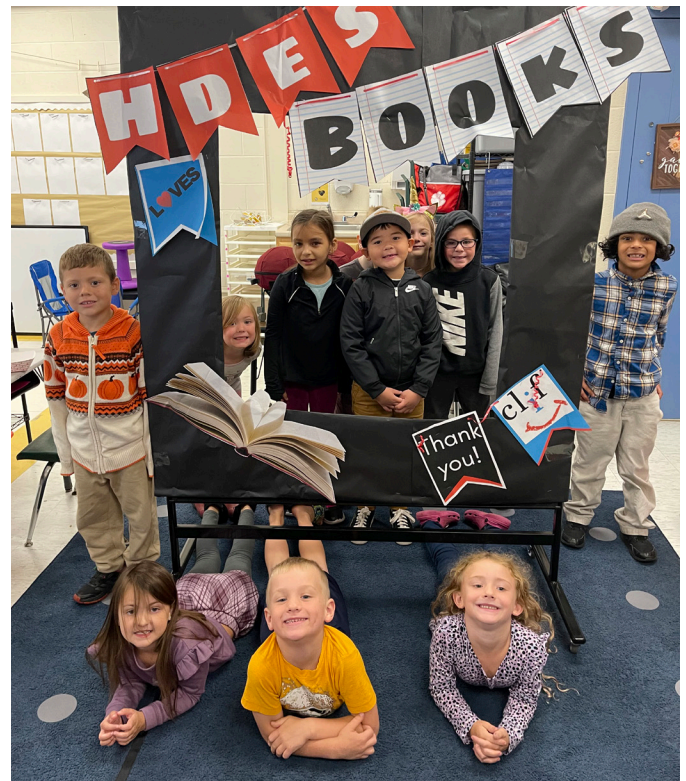


Literacy as a Cornerstone

This grant is more than just a funding opportunity. It's a starting point for our school's literacy goals. It represents a commitment to leveling the playing field for all students, giving them the tools and resources to thrive as readers.

For our students, it means access to a wealth of books and literacy experiences that might otherwise be out of reach. It's about empowering them with the skills they need to succeed academically and nurturing a passion for reading that will serve them for a lifetime.

Our school has embraced literacy as a cornerstone of youth development by creating a dedicated reading room. This vibrant space is designed to be welcoming and stocked with diverse books to cater to all interests and reading levels. This is a location that is used to help regulate students' behaviors, build relationships, and provide opportunities for students to engage with literature.



Teaching is my passion, and I thrive on finding ways to make learning come to life for my students. My energy is renewed each year when I build new relationships with my students and families and find new ways to meet each student's diverse needs. A core belief of mine is that education needs to be engaging to be meaningful, and nothing is more self-rewarding than having my students excited to walk into my classroom and learn how to read!

Guest contributor Danielle Parenteau is a first-grade teacher at the Hillsboro-Deering Elementary School and co-coordinator of the school's CLiF Year of the Book grant for 2023-24.



CLiF presenter Marek Bennett hosts a writing workshop at Putney Elementary School, Putney, VT

CLiF awards literacy grants of varying durations and funding levels throughout the calendar year. While each of CLiF's programs is unique, a shared common goal is inspiring children to find joy in reading and writing. Over the summer months, CLiF's widespread Summer Readers program provides storytelling presentations and book giveaways to camps and other kid-centric sites across Vermont and New Hampshire, helping to alleviate summer slide.

CLiF PRESENTER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Daryl Seitchik

I'm a cartoonist and teacher living in Vermont. As a child, I loved to write and illustrate stories. It wasn't until college that I discovered comics, which fused writing and drawing into a magical new language. Eventually, I realized I didn't just want to draw comics, but to teach them, so I now teach comics at schools, libraries and arts centers all over New England.

My favorite thing about teaching kids is that I don't really have to teach them. Kids are natural cartoonists, and even the ones still learning how to read can write with pictures. The ones who only draw stick figures still make them say or do things no stick figure has ever said or done before. The kids I work with constantly inspire me.

For example, I'm currently working on a graphic novel whose original concept was born in comics class. I was live-drawing, and a student requested bunnies. I drew them on the moon, which we decided was made of cheese, and then we named the bunnies after different cheeses. Now the moon bunnies regularly appear in my classes, and some students think they are real. I'm excited to make them even more real in this book.

We often talk about how comics appeal to reluctant readers, but they can also appeal to reluctant writers. I've witnessed so many kids who struggle with spelling not let that stop them from making pages of comics with speech bubbles and narration, because they have a story they want to tell.



A page spread from Daryl Seitchik's comic book, *How We Read: A Graphic Guide to Literacy*

Award Boosts Summer Reading

One of the primary vendors through whom CLiF purchases new, high-quality books for our giveaways is First Book, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit, whose mission is to ensure quality education access for all children in North America. As a longtime partner of the organization, CLiF receives discounts on books through the First Book Marketplace, a curated selection of titles with a special emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

Even with generous discounts, our much-loved book giveaways represent a significant expense for CLiF, particularly during the busy summer months, when the CLiF Summer Readers program is in full swing. Because each child who attends a CLiF event leaves with two new books to take home, we must constantly replenish our library shelves to ensure we can continue to offer a wide range of titles. This May, we received a very welcome surprise when First Book awarded CLiF a \$20,000 grant toward summer reading materials.

According to First Book representative Maggie Osborn, “This grant was made through a generous private donation to First Book and will support the distribution of books to CLiF partner organizations. First Book is delighted to partner with CLiF in providing children access to new, diverse books this summer.”



Dragon day at Morristown Centennial Library, sponsored by CLiF's Literacy Enrichment Grant, Morristown, VT



Duncan McDougall reads to an enthralled audience at the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, VT

Early Literacy Fun

This spring, CLiF partnered with the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, one of the most beautiful and historic libraries in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, to highlight our shared focus on early literacy for children from birth to five. As a recipient of CLiF's Community Literacy Grant, the library chose to host a Literacy Appreciation Day with CLiF founder and storyteller Duncan McDougall.

On the day of the event, 135 children, teachers, and parents filled the upstairs of the library for a lively and engaging morning of stories and songs that included “The Wheels on the Bus,” “Pete the Cat,” and other favorites. Inspiring children to love reading at a young age, and creating early access to high-quality books are key elements of CLiF's mission.

“The event was enjoyed by all, and every child left with two beautiful new books to read,” said youth services librarian Becky Hatfield. “This special event helps us to reinforce the link between our childcare outreach program and the library and ensure that our youngest patrons feel welcome. We are so grateful to CLiF for making this day possible.”

Sky Stories

In March, CLiF held our second annual Two-Sentence Story Contest. In a nod to April's total eclipse, young writers in New Hampshire and Vermont were challenged to “tell us a story that takes place in the sky.”

The entries poured in—over 900 of them, when all was said and done. Though brief in length, there was no shortage of imagination. There were leprechauns, unicorns, bad guys and heroes. Eagles soared, and clouds

billowed. Mythical tigers explored constellations, while comets streaked across the universe. Most wrote in prose; a few in verse. Some chose to add illustrations; others let their words stand alone.

Though it was no easy task, we finally winnowed our pool of stories down to eight winners across four age groups: kindergarten and under; grades one and two; grades three and four; and grades five and six. Each of our winners received a five-book library curated to their interests.



Scan the QR code for more about the contest and to read the winning entries.

As always, there's a lot on the horizon for CLiF, including several exciting upcoming collaborations, and a new honorary role for one team member. Plus, meet the man who first answered CLiF's call for volunteers 15 years ago, and has never looked back. And, it is with deepest gratitude that we bid a bittersweet farewell to two of our dedicated board members as their terms conclude. Read on!

WITH GRATITUDE



Mark Beams joined CLiF's board in 2018, serving as treasurer from 2020 to 2022, and chair from 2022 to 2024. In his role as chair, he gracefully led the organization through an unprecedented period of change that included the first-ever executive director

transition, and the construction of and move to a new headquarters. "His deep commitment and wise, thoughtful guidance have been invaluable to the organization," said Executive Director Laura Rice.



John Vogel also joined CLiF's board in 2018, serving as treasurer from 2022 to 2024. He played a vital role in the development of CLiF's new headquarters, from scouting building sites, to advising on the land purchase, to overseeing the construction

process, and pressing for the building to be as energy efficient as possible. (To his credit, CLiF HQ is 100 percent fossil fuel free and boasts a rooftop solar array to offset electrical usage.) "If it weren't for John's literally countless hours of effort and oversight on the project, I truly don't know if we would have our building," said Rice.

Thank you, Mark and John for your outstanding contributions to CLiF, which will continue to benefit the organization through the many chapters still ahead!

LUCKY CLOVER



Cassie Willner (center) with Red Clover committee members at the 2024 Vermont Library Association conference

We proudly congratulate CLiF program manager **Cassie Willner** on her recent appointment to the Red Clover Book Award committee, where she will be one of the Vermont literacy experts in charge of selecting the 10 picture books in contention for the annual award, and developing related activities.

Created in 1997, the Red Clover Book Award is designed for children in kindergarten through fourth grade, and is intended to foster awareness, understanding and appreciation of the picture book. Each year, thousands of Vermont schoolchildren read the nominated picture books, and vote for their favorite in the spring.

"I'm looking forward to reading lots and lots of newly published picture books, deepening my appreciation for children's literature, and connecting with members of the Red Clover committee over our shared goals of nurturing an enthusiasm for literacy."

—Cassie Willner

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



When CLiF founder **Duncan McDougall** posted a call for volunteers on Front Porch Forum in the fall of 2009, **Jim Comley** responded. With a background in education spanning nearly four decades, Jim was impressed by “the foundation’s goal of introducing kids to books and promoting reading.” He’s been with us ever since, and is one of CLiF’s longest serving volunteers.

Jim has collected many CLiF memories over the years, and fondly recalls processing books in the garage that formerly served as CLiF’s library, where resident golden retriever Yoshi would open doors with her paws so that she could wander in to visit with the volunteers. Having worked so many years in that garage, Jim says that he loves that the new headquarters has “lots of light and space to work, and better equipment to accomplish our tasks.”

About his favorite part of volunteering, Jim says, “It’s good to have a place to regularly interact with like-minded people. Also, CLiF’s photos of smiling kids posing with their new books is evidence that we are contributing to a very worthy endeavor.”



Jim’s a reader and researcher! Scan the QR code to learn more about him, and glean a book suggestion or two.

Collaborations



Fair Game

Our thanks to **NorthCountry Federal Credit Union** for selecting CLiF as the community partner for the 2024 Champlain Valley Fair. Billed as the “ten best days of summer,” this year’s fair runs from **Aug. 23**

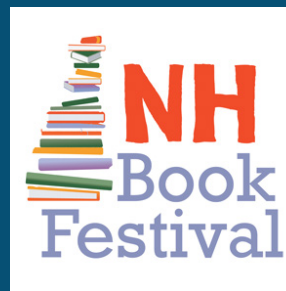
through Sept. 1 at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction, VT, and is anticipated to draw upwards of 120,000 fairgoers. The partnership is an exciting opportunity for CLiF to raise awareness and funds for our organization, while sharing the joys of reading with kids and families in a fun and interactive setting.



On Tap

CLiF is a proud 2024 recipient of the Sunshine Fund, an initiative created by **Lawson’s Finest Liquids** to benefit area nonprofits and advance thriving communities. In lieu of tips, visitors to the Lawson’s Taproom in

Waitsfield, VT are encouraged to contribute to the Fund. (Not to worry, Lawson’s employees are paid a living wage!) Last year, Lawson’s donated \$312,025 to Sunshine Fund recipients; to date, the program has raised over \$1.4 million for local organizations. CLiF’s turn “on tap” is slated for **Sept. 16-30**, so come raise a glass!



Book Fest

This fall marks the first-ever New Hampshire Book Festival, an event founded by authors **Emilie Christie Burack** (see back cover) and **Sarah McCraw Crow**. Scheduled for **Oct. 4-5** in Concord, NH, the festival will offer

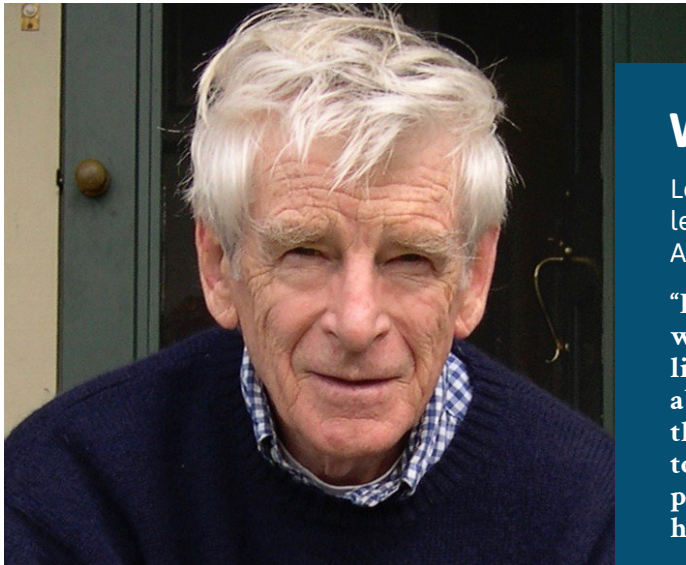
programming for booklovers of all ages, including a children’s keynote speech by award-winning author **Kate DiCamillo**. CLiF is thrilled to be collaborating with festival organizers and sponsors on this inaugural event. Special thanks to **Ledyard Bank** for coordinating a festival book drive on our behalf!



Children's Literacy Foundation
3579 Waterbury-Stowe Road
Waterbury Center, VT 05677

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
Burlington, VT
PERMIT NO. 165



Dr. Robert Christie
Sept. 22, 1923 - July 11, 2022

Why they give:

Longtime donor **Dr. Robert Christie** chose to honor CLiF with a legacy gift in recognition of his commitment to our mission. As his daughter, **Emilie Christie Burack**, recalls:

“Dad was always strategizing about how he could leave the world in a better place. He believed deeply in the power of literacy to transform lives, and was especially concerned about the futures of children who did not master reading by the fourth grade. Giving to CLiF was, in a way, a love letter to the north country. A gift he knew would be in good hands, put to good use, and might help transform the communities he loved, admired, and wanted to thrive.”

Planned giving is an impactful way to ensure that CLiF's work is sustained for many years to come. If you are considering this generous choice, we would be happy to discuss options and answer any questions you may have.

Please contact Laura Rice at
laura@clifonline.org or **802-244-0146**.