

READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

Raising readers: impact, nostalgia intertwine in new campaign

By Sara Busse

The year was 1986. A small cadre of volunteers, arms filled with children's books, made their way into grade schools in Charleston, ready to share their passion for reading. Little did they know the impact they would have on generations of young students.

The year is 2016. Read Aloud is in 29 counties, with hopes of spreading statewide. And those original little listeners are all grown up and reading to their children today.

Generation Read Aloud.

That theme kicks off the 2016-2017 Annual Fund campaign and will run throughout the year as the organization expands, reflects, encourages and, yes, reads.

"In this digital age, it is encouraging to hear that something as simple as a story, read aloud by an enthusiastic adult, can make a lasting impression on a child," explained Lynn Kessler, communications and development director for Read Aloud. "We often hear stories from today's readers about how they were influenced by Read Aloud volunteers when they were in school."

Efforts are underway to find "grown-ups" who have fond memories of Read Aloud in their childhood classrooms. These memories will be shared throughout the winter and at Read-A-Palooza, the organization's annual spring fund-raising event. Here are a few of the stories we've collected from those early years in Kanawha County; we're looking forward to hearing many more memories from across the state!

Emilie Doty Love, mortgage lender, United Bank, remembers hearing **Moby Dick** as a child in a classroom at Holz Elementary.

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All smiles at the Summit

Morgan County Chapter President Penny Gladwell and husband David, a chapter board member, share a laugh at July's Read Aloud Summit.

See more photos and read about the conference on our website.



Fall 2016

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Building momentum, amplifying impact

This is a jam-packed issue and I don't want to use precious space to preview stories you can read. Suffice it to say much has occurred to inspire and fuel us for the year ahead. Chapter leaders attending our summer conference learned that last year, **Read Aloud placed 993 readers in 1,241 classrooms throughout our 29 participating counties.** Inspired by these statistics and information shared about individual chapter projects, participants returned to their counties with a bounty of ideas for an even more productive year.

Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. The reader and teacher surveys returned to us this summer speak to the heart of Read Aloud's mission: its impact on students and their perception of reading. Consider these quotes from students, relayed to us by our volunteer readers (visit our website for more stories like these):

- "I used to think I didn't like any books but now that you read those books I see that there are books I like!"
- "When we were going to start a new book after *Hatchet*, I didn't think any would be that great, but when you read it, it makes the story sound very real so I can visualize it in my head."
- "I look forward to every Thursday morning and one time I was sick but I came in just for you!"

Students are not the only ones who benefited. Numerous readers indicated that their visit to the classroom was the highlight of their week. One reader credited the program with helping her cope with her grief following the death of her spouse; another, who had moved away from grandchildren, noted that "reading to 'my' third graders filled a void only a child can fill."

In short, Read Aloud works—and it offers a win/win!

Helping us maintain our momentum and keep volunteers in classrooms is new staff member Marsha Hoyer. She assumed Nancy Reed's job this fall and is ably assisted by Lois Payne, who has been a part-time staffer for several years. More about them in future issues. Read on! ~ *Mary Kay Bond, RAWV Executive Director*

Read Aloud's Nancy Reed retires

by Lesley McCullough McCallister

While August marked the start of school for many students in West Virginia, it also marked the end of an era for the Read Aloud West Virginia state office when Program Administrator Nancy Reed retired on August 31.

Reed has been one of three staff members tasked with guiding and assisting local Read Aloud chapters during her five-year tenure with RAWV. When asked to describe Nancy, it was clear everyone agreed she was meticulously organized, unequivocally reliable, extremely compassionate and has been a tremendous asset.

"Nancy has given us a friendly, consistent voice to the public and our volunteers," RAWV Executive Director Mary Kay Bond said. "She is the consummate professional and cares about our program to her core. She has such a way with people, and her concern for accuracy makes me confident we can supply our chapters with the information they need in a timely manner."

Berkeley County Read Aloud President Marsha Dodson recalled a time when she called to request some information and Nancy was leaving the office to go on vacation. When Reed realized Dodson needed the information right away, she stayed at the office to accommodate the request.

"Nancy's contribution and dedication made a significant impact on this program," Raleigh County Volunteer Reader Coordinator Patty Farley said. "It is evident by her hard work that she truly believes in the benefits of Read Aloud to children of West Virginia. I will certainly miss her and the support and dedication she has given to this program."

Greenbrier County Chapter President Sally Parker echoed the others' sentiments saying, "I knew Read Aloud was in good hands with Nancy in the main office, and I really don't know how they will replace her."

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Back-to-school flood relief drive exceeds expectations

By Nikki Moses

How can we help?

That was the burning question asked by compassionate people in West Virginia and beyond after devastating flooding hit the Mountain State in June.

Two people called state Board of Education member Beverly Kingery. She was on vacation, but she said, "Give me a day or two..."

Matt Browning, communications director at West Virginia State University, contacted Read Aloud: "Can we work together to help?"

Many more followed. As momentum built, it became clear that a coordinated effort was needed. Bev Kingery, along with husband Phil, took the lead in the project that has put 9,875 backpacks filled with school supplies in the hands of West Virginia students in time for the new school year!

Donations worth more than \$200,000 began flowing in. Businesses, religious organizations, civic and professional groups, educators and individuals and the media dove in.

What could have been logistical chaos (10,000 packs of paper, 30,000 spiral notebooks, pencils galore...) was a smooth operation under Kingery's guidance. The former school teacher, principal and superintendent procured warehouse space at an 84 Lumber facility Logan. With the help of many community leaders and volunteers the sorting and packing and transporting began. Logan County's Commission, Board of Education and Sheriff were key players. Deliveries to students began Aug. 5.

In Kanawha County, Bridget Foster led collection efforts with the help of Read Aloud and WVSU Extension Service. WOWK-TV asked viewers to fill a school bus in their Quarrier Street Parking lot, while Capitol Market, Charleston Town Center Mall, Courtyard Marriott, South Charleston Public Library, Wal-Mart in South Charles-

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Left: Two young volunteers help with school supply packing in Logan; Below: Students at Summersville Middle School in Nicholas County receive backpacks filled with supplies.

34 West Virginia counties
& **16** other states donated



40+ businesses &
organizations participated



Donated storage & delivery totaled **\$13,875**

29 schools in **8** counties received backpacks & supplies

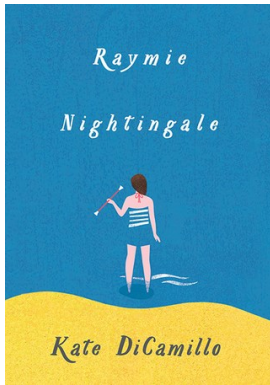
Value of supplies collected & delivered to teachers = **\$10,000**



Book Reviews

Raymie Nightingale by Kate DiCamillo

Reviewed by Jennie Fitzkee



When Raymie Clarke’s father runs off with a dental hygienist, she has a plan to get him back; but she will have to win the Little Miss Central Florida Tire competition to make this happen.

I was curious how the storyline would pull me in, and it did not disappoint. Ten-year-old Raymie must learn how to twirl a baton to win the competition and have her picture in the newspaper. Her father will see the picture and come back home. That’s her plan. Raymie befriends two girls at twirling lessons: brave and tough Beverly who can pick a lock and ever-cheerful Louisiana who lives with her grandmother and is prone to fainting.

The girls slowly band together as their diverse personalities emerge. As we learn about their lives and the innermost parts of their characters, particularly Raymie, a string of events occur. I could not put down the book because “what happens next” had me hooked.

The girls must solely depend on each other that summer. Louisiana dubs the trio *The Three Rancheros*.

The story is based in 1975. While the adults in Raymie’s life reflect a different generation, adding great flavor to the story, the three girls remain as true to today as yesteryear. The author writes for children and understands that growing up is timeless.

Kate DiCamillo has a way with words; she pulls the reader into her characters, and by the second chapter feelings of “That’s me!” have us locked in.

And what happens to the Little Miss Central Tire Florida competition? You’ll have to read the book to find out. It is well worth the read. Bravo to author Kate DiCamillo as she writes this book much in the style of “Because of Winn-Dixie.” If you enjoyed that book, you will certainly want to read **Raymie Nightingale**.

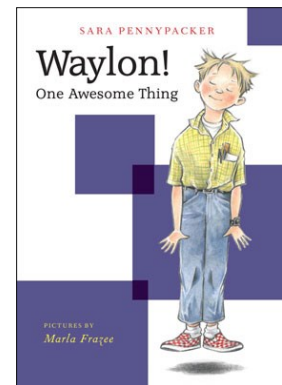
Jennie Fitzkee, a West Virginia native who lives in Massachusetts, has been teaching and reading to preschoolers for 30 years. Her blog, A Teacher’s Reflections, chronicles lessons that extend far beyond the classroom.

Waylon! One Awesome Thing by Sara Pennypacker (author of the *Clementine* series)

Reviewed by Debra K. Sullivan

Filled with an array of nicely developed characters, **Waylon!** moves at a fairly brisk clip through the daily doings and mind wanderings of Waylon, the “scienciest boy” first appearing in *Clementine*’s third grade class. Now a fourth grader, Waylon grapples with shifts in his classmates (including *Clementine* who makes an appearance) along with changes in his 14-year-old sister and the resulting altered family dynamics. Helped along the way by his down-to-earth scientist mother, his creative-minded father, his tender-hearted but going-through-a-phase sister, an unexpected ally, and others, Waylon deals with aspirations, the “new rules” of fourth grade, school projects, friendship, and age-appropriate dilemmas.

Waylon’s scientific knowledge is extensive and peppers his conversations and inner musings as well as his remarks exclaimed excitedly in the classroom. Writing with a light and humorous touch, and making good use of whimsical drawings by Pennypacker’s go-to *Clementine* artist Marla Frazee, the author cleverly weaves scientific facts into the narrative, charmingly explained by Waylon in animated, simple terms.



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Read Aloud West Virginia receives national book grant

By Lesley McCullough McCallister

Read Aloud West Virginia was recently selected by the Coughlan Companies Communities Fund in partnership with GreaterGood.org (GGO) to receive a National Book grant valued at nearly \$200,000 that includes 30,000 books that will



directly benefit West Virginia children and families.

This generous donation to Read Aloud is part of larger 250,000-book distribution campaign throughout the country to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Capstone, Coughlan's children's media publishing company, which creates content in a variety of print and digital formats for school libraries, classrooms and at-home learning. Read Aloud was chosen specifically by Coughlan and GGO, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to improving the well-being of people, pets and the planet.

"At Coughlan, we are passionate about improving the lives of all children through our partnerships, innovative outreach programs, and in-kind book donations," said Christie Skilbred, Coughlan Companies corporate giving representative. "We are thrilled to partner with GreaterGood.org to provide children in West Virginia with the tools they need for success."

Read Aloud West Virginia Executive Director Mary Kay Bond noted that these books will be distributed later this fall to students in Read Aloud schools. Those who were hit hardest by the floods that ravaged West Virginia at the end of June will be given first priority.

"At Read Aloud, we know that access to books is a critical piece of the literary puzzle," said Bond. "The books provided by generous organizations like Coughlan and GGO will help us to instill a love of reading in children living in literacy-poor regions."

For additional information about Coughlan Companies and GGO, please visit www.coughlancompanies.com and www.GreaterGood.org.

Nancy Reed

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When asked what she will miss most, Reed said, "The people!" Then she added, "From all over this beautiful state to locally here in Charleston there are so many wonderful, helpful, creative people involved with Read Aloud, and Mary Kay and [Communications and Development Director] Lynn lead the way."

Reed added that her favorite thing about working at RAWV has been witnessing the tremendous growth in the program and its impact on counties, communities and families, "from the number of readers who attend an orientation to the number of schools and counties that enroll," Reed explained. "It is so wonderful to be a part of an organization that is encouraging and motivating children, our future, to read!"

While Reed is looking forward to spending more time with her family, especially new grandson Cooper who was born in June, she still plans to be involved with RAWV in retirement. Reed agreed to be the volunteer chairperson for the newly created Kanawha County Read Aloud Board, which will begin later this fall.

Lesley McCallister is a Read Aloud supporter, volunteer and newsletter contributor and a freelance journalist.

Waylon!

(from page 4)

Waylon's moments of introspection and self-discovery ring true. The dialogue is authentic as are the doubts and quandaries Waylon confronts. Why do things have to change? How can he reconnect with his sister? Why are the fourth grade boys following one student's lead and competing now instead of collaborating like they used to? Why do people act the way they do? Will his big dreams ever come true?

Waylon! One Awesome Thing is the first in Penny-packer's new series. By the end of the story, Waylon grows in an understanding of himself and others while at the same time coming to the realization that the best solutions often come from the most unexpected places and in the most unpredictable ways.

Suggested target audience: grades 2 – 4.

Debra K. Sullivan is a retired educator, member of the WV State Library Commission and the Kanawha County Public Library Board, an avid reader and proud grandmother of two children who are passionate about books.

Help us raise more readers in West Virginia!

DONATE TODAY!

Online • www.readaloudwestvirginia.org

By mail • PO Box 1784, Charleston, WV 25326 | By phone • (304) 345-5212

Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) tax credits are available.

Readers

(from page 1)

"I loved being read to, and it was even when I was in third grade!" Emilie said. She's passed along her love of reading to her four sons and is now a regular reader at Overbrook Elementary in Charleston.

Haley Santmyer, a teacher at Sacred Heart Grade School, remembers parents coming to read when she was a student at the school. She now shares many of those books with her second grade students.

"Having been read to as a child, I can honestly say that it helped me to become the adult reader that I am today," Haley explained. "My love for reading developed at an early age from being surrounded by a multitude of books. Parent volunteers would come in once a week for Read Aloud at our school. I always looked forward to the Read Aloud days and loved the many different books and authors that we read. As a teacher, many of the books in my classroom library are books that were read to me in my elementary years. I hope these books will have the same effect on my students that they had on me at their age.

"When I think back to my first Read Aloud experiences the first story that pops into my head is **Bony Legs** by Joanna Cole. The aide in our kindergarten class would turn off the lights and read the whole book with a witch's voice, then at the end she would scare us. We would laugh and scream and beg her to read it again," Haley remembers. Other books she enjoyed as a child include **We're Going on a Bear Hunt** by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, **The True Story of the Three Little Pigs** by Jon Scieszka, **The Polar Express** by Chris Van Allsburg, **Frog and Toad** by Arnold Lobel, **The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash** by Trinka Hakes Noble and **Holes** by Louis Sachar.

As a teacher, Haley sees the value of Read Aloud.

"Read Aloud encourages students to read more and can often be that child's only exposure to literature. Without Read Aloud volunteers, many children would

never be exposed to books that not only teach a valuable lesson but also expose children to [new] words and expressions," she explained.

Claire Barth, sales associate for West Virginia Commercial in Charleston, fondly recalls Read Aloud at Kenna Elementary. "I always looked forward to Read Aloud in elementary school," Claire said enthusiastically. "It was a weekly highlight. My favorite was when my mom would come in to volunteer. She always read Junie B. Jones books. I still remember the first line of every book. She always made it fun, which to me is the most important part. Read Aloud makes reading fun."

If you grew up with a Read Aloud volunteer in your elementary school classroom, we want to hear your story! Did it influence you to become a reader? Do you recall which books made an impact or which ones were just fun to hear? Send your memories to Lynn Kessler, lkessler@readaloudwestvirginia.org.

Sara Busse is a long-time Charleston resident and community volunteer. Her work at Trinity's Table earned her recognition as a 2016 YWCA Woman of Achievement.

Flood Relief

(from page 3)

ton and WVSU all served as drop-off locations to provide ease of access for donors.

Counties across the state saw communities come together to help. "This was a case of many hands making light work," Mary Kay Bond said. "Everyone worked together."

Nikki Moses is the former editor of the Read Aloud newsletter and a board member. She is an active volunteer in the Charleston community.

Read Aloud Boone County goes LIVE!

By Sara Busse

Unbeknownst to him, WOWK weatherman Spencer Adkins inspired a new delivery system for Read Aloud of Boone County. By embracing technology, Chapter President Jennifer Griffith is spreading Read Aloud throughout the county with enthusiasm and passion.

"I was on Facebook and saw Spencer Adkins go live with an update about a storm." She joined the conversation. "When I did, I saw the interaction between me, him and others... people typing in, asking questions... he would read them and say their names with a reply. I thought, 'How neat is that?!' I sent a question to see if the storm would hit Madison. He said, 'Jennifer, it looks like it will hit in about ten minutes down the Boone line.' From that day on, I would see journalists and others 'go live' and thought, 'How could I incorporate that into my Read Aloud?'"

Griffith went live on Facebook, reading children's favorite books. She promoted the Tuesday night Facebook readings to parents and children. Authors joined in live discussions. And it was a hit!

Griffith knew that most homes have a computer, iPad or iPhone, all of which have links to social media.

"My goal was to get parents involved as well as the kids. Having it at night, I hoped to draw a larger crowd, that parents and grandparents would sit with their child, watch and engage, just as I did with Spencer!"

The story time ran through June and July. Parents would comment as the story progressed. Griffith's expressive delivery guaranteed many responses from parents. They would message her, saying how excited their child was when Griffith called him or her by name.

"I would give a 'shout out' to the kids when I saw their posts. 'Hey Bobby, are you ready for Storytime? We have a great book to read tonight.'"

Griffith said one great thing about Facebook Live is that it stays on the Facebook page and those who missed it can view at a later time.

Griffith, a former teacher in the Boone County school system and current piano teacher who now works with WVU Physicians, has been encouraging reading in her community for many years. She created a program called "Skyhawk Read Aloud" that involved high school football players reading to elementary students. Book drives at football games, Read to My Pet Day and other initiatives have helped promote reading in the county, as well.

Visit Read Aloud WV-Boone County on Facebook to see Griffith's videos and to stay updated on the exciting events in the county.



The WV Book Festival returns to Charleston, October 28-29!

Featuring author workshops and talks, a sprawling marketplace, used book sale and children's activities.

www.wvbookfestival.org

BB&T West Virginia Foundation continues to support Read Aloud Book Distribution programs

By Melody Simpson

The BB&T West Virginia Foundation has awarded Read Aloud a \$2,500 grant to support book distribution programs throughout the state. BB&T has provided similar financial support for several years now, and we are grateful for the role they continue to play in helping Read Aloud maintain and expand its book distribution programs.

While West Virginia's eighth grade reading scores still lag behind the national average, in 2015 they were the only state scores in the country to show a significant improvement, according to data released by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2015. However, too many West Virginia children lack access to the tools they need to succeed in school and in life, and books are one of the most important tools required for raising a generation of learners.

Read Aloud has several book distribution programs designed to address this need, including Snuggle and Read (preschool children and families), Reading Round-ups (kindergarten enrollment), Food for Thought (elementary schools), a summer reading pilot program, and even prison workshops and book clubs (to encourage adult inmates to develop reading habits and read to their children).

Thank you, BB&T, for supporting these programs and helping us put books into the hands, and homes, of West Virginia children!



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Do you prefer to read all about us in print or on screen? An electronic version of our newsletter is now available! Please use the contact information at bottom right to let us know your preference.

“A perfect fit” – Books-A-Million stores support Read Aloud statewide Oct. 8 By Melody Simpson

PLEASE! On Saturday, Oct. 8, go to your local Books-A-Million store in West Virginia and buy some books! (Or toys, tech, or more, to borrow from their logo, although we strongly lean toward books.) And when asked if you would like the store to donate a percentage of your purchase to Read Aloud, say “YES!”

Last year, Raleigh County Read Aloud connected with its local Books-A-Million store for a book fair in support of Read Aloud West Virginia. The event was the brainchild of Anne-Marie Johnson, the store’s general manager and a Raleigh County Read Aloud board member. Believing that BAM and Read Aloud were a “perfect fit,” Johnson hoped to expand her local effort into an ongoing, statewide partnership.

That partnership is blossoming. Ed Reidy, regional manager for Books-A-Million, agreed to have all BAM stores in his region host an event for Read Aloud (with participation from the Martinsburg store, thanks to manager Scott Brown). Between 10 and 20 percent of each designated purchase will be donated by BAM to Read Aloud West Virginia. Local Read Aloud chapters will have volunteers at store locations during the full-day event, with information about Read Aloud and its programs.

“An event like this is a complete win-win for Books-A-Million and Read Aloud,” Reidy noted. “Both of us want a literate, book-loving citizenry, and this is a great way for us to reach out to customers and a local philanthropic organization in our community.” Reidy hopes this is only the first in what becomes a regular statewide fundraising event for Read Aloud in BAM stores.

So bring your children, your grandchildren, your neighbor’s kids, the soccer team after the game—heck, bring your inner child!—and browse the shelves at your local Books-A-Million. You’ll be happy, your local Books-A-Million store will be happy, and Read Aloud West Virginia will be happy—and very grateful for your support.

Anne-Marie Johnson should be pretty happy, too....

Melody Simpson is an attorney at Bowles Rice LLP, a volunteer reader and member of the Read Aloud board and newsletter committee.

Support Read Aloud when you visit these Books-A-Million stores on October 8!

Barboursville • Beckley • Bluefield • Bridgeport
Charleston (two locations) • Martinsburg • Morgantown
Vienna • Washington, PA • Wheeling

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