

READ ALOUD

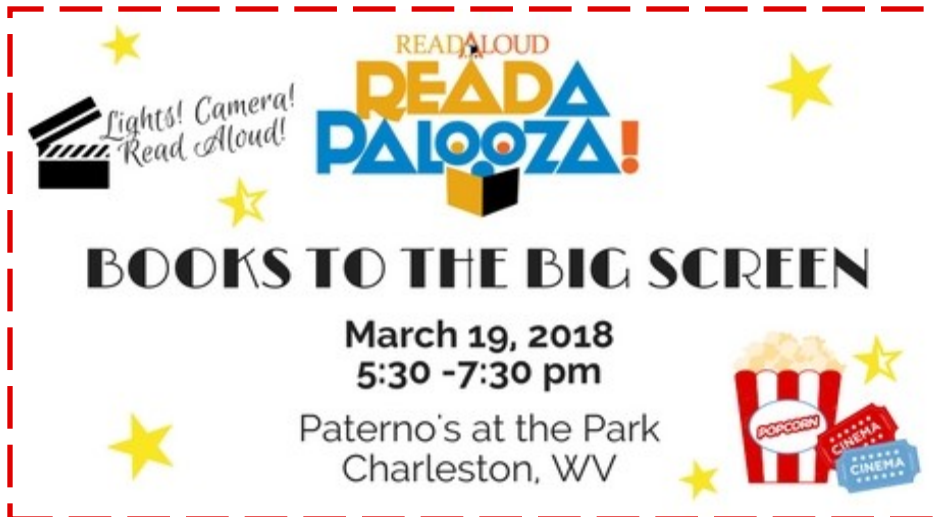
WEST VIRGINIA

Lights! Camera! Read Aloud! Read-A-Palooza returns on March 19

Join us for "Books to the Big Screen: Read-A-Palooza 2018!" Read Aloud West Virginia will go to the cinema to celebrate children's books that have been adapted into movies, and we hope to see you on the red carpet!

The annual fund/fundraiser will be held Monday, March 19, 2018, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the popular Paterno's At The Park restaurant in Charleston. In addition to the delicious food and great company, we will have a silent auction filled with wonderful items including artwork, excursions and more—and all of the proceeds will help continue the good works of Read Aloud across the state.

Tickets are \$35 each in advance and \$40 after March 9, and there are many sponsorship levels available for supporters, as well. Visit the Read Aloud West Virginia website www.readaloudwestvirginia.org or call the Read Aloud office at 304-345-5212 for questions or to purchase tickets or sponsorships.



Light! Camera! Read Aloud!

READ ALOUD
READ A PALOOZA!

BOOKS TO THE BIG SCREEN

March 19, 2018
5:30 - 7:30 pm

Paterno's at the Park
Charleston, WV

POPCORN
CINEMA

Winter 2018

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Lunchtime reading a big hit!

Pictured right is Vice Principal Patrick Ashton reading to students at Mountain Ridge Intermediate School in Gerrardstown, Berkeley County.

See page 4 for the full story!



An abundance of Read Aloud riches

The beginning of 2018 finds a great deal of good news to report from Read Aloud—so much news that we decided to shorten my column to give us more room to share it with you. But, as they say in the infomercial world... “that’s not all!”

You can find additional stories, book lists and book reviews by visiting our website: <https://readaloudwestvirginia.org>. There, you can see photos of Fayette County’s Snuggle and Read programs and the dedicated Berkeley County volunteers who recorded a gift for the community at a local radio station. The piece aired in December, but you can find a link on our website which will allow you to listen yourself!

I remain deeply grateful and, frankly, in awe of the generosity of West Virginians in sharing their time, creativity and financial resources to help us build student reading interest. As many of you have heard me say, I firmly believe the foundation of West Virginia’s economy is a healthy, educated workforce. Our volunteers, donors and partners work toward building excitement in reading so that today’s student is tomorrow’s reader and life-long learner.

~ **Mary Kay Bond, Read Aloud West Virginia Executive Director**

OWL program encourages reading to babies and toddlers

A program launched by the Kanawha County Public Library is making it easier for families to read regularly to their preschoolers. The Open Worlds of Learning (OWL) program offers a simple way to check out a variety of age-appropriate books for children from birth to age three.

Parents and guardians age 18 and older may apply for an OWL card, receive a bag of ten books and keep them as long as they like. Once the books have been read, they can be exchanged for another bag of books. Since young children can be a bit rough on the books they love and explore, families are not charged for damaged books.

Currently 150 families are enrolled in the program and more than 3,000 books were checked out between the program’s inception in April and December. Terri Wooten, Kanawha County Public Library spokesperson reports, “The program has proven to be quite popular. Parents appreciate that they can check out a number of books at one time and can keep them as long as they like.”



Pictured above are Aaron Ku, Elaine Lau, Dolce Ku, Sarah Talkington, and Peng-Peng Wang. *Credit to Kenny Kemp, Gazette Mail.*

This program aligns with one of the major goals of Read Aloud West Virginia: to encourage families to begin reading to children at birth. The benefits of reading to children are numerous. In addition to building a child’s vocabulary and attention span, a 2015 study cited by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) found: “Children from more stimulating home reading environments had greater activity in brain areas supporting narrative comprehension and visual imagery, which are important for both language and reading.” The AAP issued a policy statement in 2014 recommending that physicians encourage families to read to their children from birth.

A new traveling exhibition inspired by Mo Willems, children’s book author and illustrator, will debut in February 2018 at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh!



Horses, hamburgers and halftimes: everything goes in Boone County

By Sara Busse

From high school football games, to pets, to Happy Meals, the Boone County chapter of Read Aloud is an example of “everything goes” when it comes to promoting reading in southern West Virginia. Chapter President Jennifer Griffith leads the charge with enthusiasm, creativity, generosity and passion.

The Boone group has come up with many new and innovative ways to boost reading, and, in turn, Read Aloud West Virginia, throughout their county. And while Griffith is the epitome of that iconic battery bunny, she realized she couldn’t do it all alone.

“We have a board!” Griffith explained proudly. “It took a while—but we have legislators, sheriffs, a group of ten that’s incredible.” Along with the school coordinators at Brookview, Madison, Sherman, Whitesville and Ramage elementary schools and under Griffith’s untiring leadership, the organization has initiated several exciting programs.

Two board members, brother-and-sister team Chris Connolly and Katie Foster, are co-owners of the McDonald’s restaurant in Madison. It’s no surprise that the omnipresent Griffith is connected to them in other parts of her busy life: her husband coached football with Chris, and she is Katie’s daughter’s piano teacher.

“Chris called me and said he wanted to do something where he gave out free items on a Saturday at McDonald’s to promote reading,” Griffith said. “We held a book drive and the kids got free happy meals, ice cream coupons, and we went on Facebook live from the restaurant. School was just starting so the timing was perfect.” Children’s books by renowned national author Laura Numeroff were featured in the Happy Meals that month, creating a perfect connection. All donated books were distributed to the elementary schools in the county.

Griffith has hosted book drives at the local Boone County high schools during football games. She’s encouraged many partnerships, including working with the coaches and Girl Scouts.

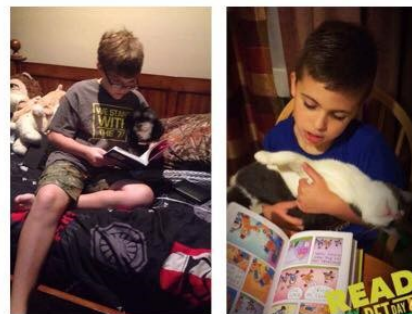
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Chris Connolly, a Boone County Chapter Board Member, poses with two McDonald’s Book Drive participants.



Boone County Chapter President, Jennifer Griffith, and husband, Shane Griffith, at the Book Drive at the Sherman High School football game.



Children from Boone County participate in “Read to Your Pet Day.”

We welcome your comments
and story ideas!
Email us at
readaloud@frontier.com.

When children drive the boat at story time

By Jennie Fitzkee

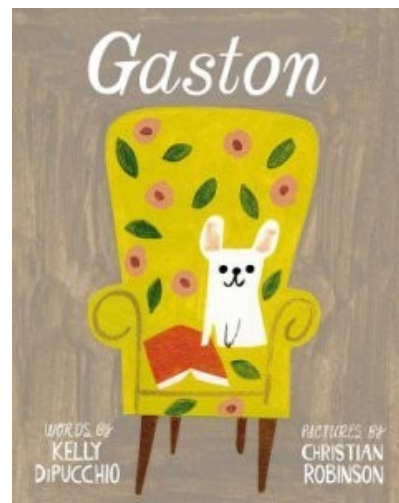
I've often said that the best learning and most meaningful experiences with children happen unexpectedly. And it happens all the time, especially with picture books. You just have to seize the moment and be ready to let go of the scripted text, the one that's in your head.

I'd like to tell you about two outstanding books where this happened, each with very different experiences:

Fi-Fi, Foo-Foo, Ooh-La-La and Gaston. Yes, reading those words from ***Gaston***, by Kelly DiPucchio to the children started it all. They cracked up (it really was funny), so I read it again. More laughing, and I laughed, too. The words in the text repeated the dogs' names. I paused, looked at the children, and read the names again—this time with a voice and an accent. Well, we roared, together. I couldn't stop laughing. My tears blocked seeing the words in the book.

Was this planned? Of course not. It just happened. Why was this important? It made their teacher (me) more human. It was a class bonding moment. If anyone was having a bad day, they weren't any longer. Laughter is the best medicine. Next, we finished reading the book, and we learned a few impromptu words in French. Oui, oui.

The story is about Gaston, who is clearly not at all like his sisters, Fi-Fi,



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Lunchtime reading a big hit

By Lesley McCullough McCallister

As first year Read Aloud West Virginia volunteer Patrick Ashton, Assistant Principal at Mountain Ridge Intermediate School in Gerrardstown, Berkeley County, was attending his Read Aloud training, he was so excited thinking about reading to one classroom that he began to contemplate how to reach his entire school. Then it hit him, the best time to reach as many students as possible at once—lunchtime!

Typically, on "Theater Thursdays" students were allowed to watch a movie during their lunch period. Building on that idea, Mr. Ashton believed Read Aloud sessions would be a fun instructional activity that also could be tied to the curriculum. During the fall semester, Mr. Ashton began weekly Read Aloud sessions for approximately 200 students during each of three lunch periods for the third, fourth and fifth graders.

The students' positive feedback was immediate. "I had kids asking me multiple times every day if I could read every day," said Mr. Ashton. "Even the boys were requesting!"

This semester he read ***Wonder*** to the fourth and fifth graders and noted when it got close to Christmas he read Christmas stories and poems and put ***Wonder*** on hold.

Just before the holiday break, Mr. Ashton was promoted and will not return as Assistant Principal in the new

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"Reading is not just a forced activity inside the classroom. Reading is exciting and enjoyable."

- Patrick Ashton

The Extra Mile:

A GRAB BAG OF IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM ENRICHMENT

Flashlight Fridays

Lauren Jarroll, a Nicholas County Chapter Board member, discovered a way to *shine a light on reading* as she was substitute teaching in Nicholas County. She found that each Friday, students in Jessica Martin and Stacy McClung's classrooms participated in "Flashlight Fridays." During these Friday afternoons, students were invited to retrieve a flashlight from a special drawer, only to be opened for this activity, and were able to choose a spot in the classroom to sit and read. The teacher would turn out the classroom lights and for fifteen minutes, students read a book of their choosing.

This activity incorporates reading with a fun twist! Allowing students to find a comfortable spot with their own flashlight and chosen book makes the encounter more personal and enlightens students' reading experiences.

Literary Luncheons

A suggestion from Laura Huffman, Valley View Elementary School in Berkeley County:

"To strengthen the love of reading, I offer my students the opportunity to enjoy a 'Literary Luncheon' once a month in my classroom. This is when we spend time together eating lunch and discussing a preselected book. At the beginning of each month, I give a short book talk and encourage students to borrow classroom copies of the book to read on their own or with family members at home.

"This project teaches not only reading, but responsibilities as well. Each student who chooses to participate has four responsibilities for Literary Luncheons: read the book, take care of the book, return the book on the day of the luncheon and participate in the discussion. On the last Friday of each month, students are responsible for returning the book in the same condition in which it was borrowed and being ready to discuss what they have read.

"Literary Luncheons provide students the opportunity to develop friendships, refine their speaking and listening skills, and discover the wonderful world of reading."



The books above were featured from September to May during Ms. Huffman's Literary Luncheons!

Boone County

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“It’s fun times for groups to help! We’ve just been really blessed with folks who see our efforts and donate,” Griffith explained.

Combining her social media savvy and her love of reading comes naturally to Griffith. Add kids and cuddly animals, and Read To Your Pet Day is born.

“It’s one of the most popular days for us. The sheriff read to his pet that day. I told my coordinators, ‘This is gonna be fun! It’s gonna be OUR day!’” Griffith enthused. “We always do it in November, and it’s fun for everybody.”

Teachers and coordinators send out information about Read To Your Pet Day, and on the designated day, the magic happens.

“That evening, those parents start taking pictures of the kids reading to their pets,” Griffith said. She posts all of the photos on their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/readaloudbcs.

“I’m uploading like a maniac. It’s the craziest night for Read Aloud. We had a horse this year! We’ve had ferrets, cats, dogs...a wide array of pets,” Griffith said. “But the main thing is this: the parents are involved. It’s fun for the child because Grandma, Grandpa, Mom and Dad are watching Billy and Sally read—it’s a family moment.”

Reading to horses, books at McDonald’s and football game book drives. All the norm for the out-of-the-ordinary Boone County Read Aloud organization.

Sara Busse is a long-time Charleston resident and community volunteer.



Children from Boone County participate in “Read to Your Pet Day.”

Lunchtime

(from page 4)

year. Thankfully, Principal Autumnne Frye has agreed to continue the lunchtime Read Aloud sessions for the students.

When asked why reading to students is so important, Mr. Ashton explained, “Enjoyment, imagination, relevance, comprehension, fluency, decoding, phonemic awareness, etc. I could go on and on. Kids need to see that adults are excited about reading. I especially wanted to do this Read Aloud with our students to promote the idea that men do like to read and it’s not just for girls/women. And although I’m far from ‘cool,’ I am very active in their lives and I wanted the kids to see that reading is not just a forced act inside the classroom. Reading is exciting and enjoyable.”

While he won’t be at Mountain Ridge full time in the future, Mr. Ashton hopes his new position will allow him the flexibility to come back and continue reading to the students on occasion. He also hopes the idea of lunchtime Read Aloud sessions spreads to other schools throughout the state.

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



(Above) A tweet from Mountain Ridge Intermediate school expressing how much the students enjoy lunchtime reading.

Story time

(from page 4)

Foo-Foo, and Ooh-La-La. The dogs meet another family, Rocky, Ricky, Bruno, and Antoinette, who is not like her brothers. The two mother dogs discuss what appears to be the obvious, a dog in each family that doesn't belong:

It seems there's been a terrible mistake. Whatever shall we do? I guess we'll let them decide.

What happens next is a story of diversity, belonging, and love. Laced with humor, the book appeals to children and adults. It certainly appeals to my children! Belly laughing made it a memory. Oh, we now sing "Fi-Fi, Foo-Foo, Ooh-La-La and Gaston" as a catchy tune.

Sometimes a simple text can be powerful. I discovered just that when I read aloud *Life*, by West Virginia native Cynthia Rylant.

The book starts with these words:

Life begins small. Even for elephants. Then it grows. Beneath the sun. And the moon. Life grows.

Powerful, indeed. I read the words slowly, taking time to stop and let the words sink in, and show the illustrations. Children were silent. The story depicts not only the elephant, but many other animals. In a matter-of-fact way, it tells the tale of how things are not always easy. Life. Yet, there is always hope and wonder ahead as we go through life. The book ends with these words:

And it is worth waking up in the morning to see what might happen. Because life begins small. And grows.

When I finished reading to this silent group, I clutched the book to my chest and paused. I said, "I love life. What do I like the most?"

Long pause and thinking.

"Singing! I love singing. Everyone knows Jennie loves singing."

And then I looked at all those little faces, looking at me. I knew what I needed to do; I asked each child what they love about life. I was stunned. I never expected to hear these answers:

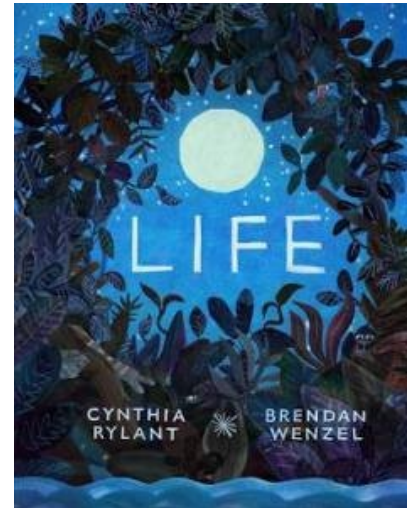
"Hearts and love. Legos. Trees. The moon. Dancing. Santa. Hearts. Rainbows. Big hearts. My big sister. Playing with Alex and Hunter. My big brother. My Mom and Dad."

My goodness!

No wonder this book has been recommended as an alternative to Dr. Seuss' book, *Oh the Places You'll Go*, as a graduation gift.

If you think books and words and stories aren't powerful, think again. When you seize the moment as you read a book aloud, and follow your instinct and heart, you will make that book far more meaningful for children. Whether it is filled with humor or worldly advice, it really doesn't matter. You will make that book come alive. You will make a difference.

*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.*





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It's not too late to give to Read Aloud West Virginia!

It's not too late to contribute to Read Aloud's 2017-2018 Annual Fund! Read Aloud's work is dependent on funds provided by our wonderful donors. These contributions enable our staff to support local chapters and grow our program.

While volunteer chapters are the face of Read Aloud in their respective communities, we know from experience that they count on an office and staff to support them. Read Aloud was founded in 1987 but from 2000-2007, we existed without staff and the number of chapters fell from 53 to four in that time period. Read Aloud was re-established with a central office in 2007-2008. Today, we serve more than 200 schools in 30 counties. That progress would not be possible without our generous donors.

Annual Fund letters were mailed in October and many of you have already contributed. We thank you! Please remember the 2017-2018 Annual Fund drive continues and is not closed at the end of the calendar year. If you have not done so, please consider making a donation to help us continue the work of getting books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia's children.

Help us raise more readers in West Virginia!

DONATE TODAY!

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read to your class or family?

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