

READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

Ross Foundation funds program support, technology upgrades

By Melody Simpson

Many thanks go to The Ross Foundation, a family foundation operating in the Mid-Ohio Valley region, for its recent \$44,000 grant to Read Aloud West Virginia! A portion of this grant is for sustaining (or starting) Read Aloud programs in Jackson, Pleasants and Wood counties; the balance is for upgrading Read Aloud's database. Thanks to this grant, we are completing a significant upgrade to our database program which will enable us to better track and communicate with those who are so critical to our programs' success—our donors, volunteer readers, county coordinators and many more.

It is somewhat unusual for donors to grant funds for operating costs like salaries and technology, but Tres Ross, executive director of The Ross
(continued on page 6)



Students at Crichton Elementary received six books each at the end of the 2015-2016 school year, thanks to a summer reading program supported by The Hollowell and Mary B. Nickell Foundations. Teachers and local administrators helped raise anticipation by offering book talks about the available selections. Children placed orders and received their books just before the summer break. The excitement was tangible! The program is scheduled to be continued in 2016-2017.

Above: Greenbrier County Chapter President Sally Parker (right) joins a teacher and group of kindergarten students as they hoist bags full of books.

Winter 2017

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Tales from the Read Aloud field

Read Aloud recently passed the one thousand active reader mark! Think of it... a cadre of one thousand volunteer readers (a number of whom read in multiple classrooms) visiting schools regularly to share a love of reading! This milestone was reached due to lot of hard work and dedication by many: the readers, but also the educators with the vision to support the program and the donors who make the work of training, recruiting and supporting our volunteers possible.

The one thousand reader milestone is important, as are other statistics we have recently shared. Knowing the numbers helps us improve and refine our efforts, but it is often in stories that we truly feel the difference we are making. Those stories will be shared as we celebrate our 30th anniversary. (Page 8) We urge you to share your experiences as a former student, current or former teacher and donor.

As you think of the ways Read Aloud has impacted you, let me share two stories from the past two months. A reader told me her first visits were met with skepticism—why was this strange lady coming to their class? She noticed with each visit they became more excited and attentive. On one of her visits, a student told her, “You are part of my family.” She then invited her to a school lunch for special friends and family members. In a short time, our reader had become an integral part of that girl’s life. We know children value what important people in their lives value. Read Aloud works on so many levels to show our children that we value them and we value reading.

The second story involves a little guy who attended a recent Snuggle and Read. He liked the story I shared and when I asked him what he thought of reading he told me he loved it. He then told me about the special person in his life...his Paw Paw. In essence, he said, “When my Paw Paw reads the words just go POW in my brain and I can read!” He summed up our mission far better than I can. When a child has someone they care about share a story, it does have a POW effect. They may not immediately be able to read as a result but that *desire* takes root in their heart and mind. Happy Reading!

~ *Mary Kay Bond, RAWV Executive Director*

Read Aloud’s reach expands to 30 counties

By Lesley McCullough McCallister

Read Aloud West Virginia was thrilled to add two more counties to its active roster during the fall of 2016 with the formation of chapters in Grant and Ohio counties.

New Read Aloud volunteers in these two counties join those already serving in 28 additional West Virginia counties, all striving to motivate the next generation of West Virginians to want to read.

According to Vanessa Harlow, director of Elementary Education and Federal Programs for Grant County Schools and Grant County chapter president, their chapter already has 30 readers actively serving 35 classrooms in three Grant County elementary schools. Harlow noted the important role Read Aloud West Virginia plays by encouraging community involvement to promote a love of reading to students.

Ohio County Read Aloud Board President Melanie Riddle noted her chapter began meeting monthly this fall and plans to train their first set of volunteers this spring.

“The addition of chapters in Grant and Ohio counties brings Read Aloud’s presence in West Virginia to 30 counties in our 30th year,” said Read Aloud West Virginia Executive Director Mary Kay Bond. “It’s an exciting milestone! We are extremely grateful to Vanessa and Melanie for their efforts and leadership.”

For more information about starting a new chapter in a West Virginia county not being served currently by Read Aloud, please contact the Read Aloud office at (304) 345-5212 or readaloud@frontier.com.

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

Beckley Art Center collaborates with Raleigh County Read Aloud

By Lesley McCullough McCallister

Last October, artists from the Beckley Art Center teamed up with two Raleigh County Read Aloud volunteers, Ann Cline and Ruth Baker, to bring original works of art coupled with original stories to area elementary students.

Peggy Dubnam and other local artists from the Beckley Art Center were staging an exhibit and auction of original dolls and their stories. Dubnam contacted Cline and Baker about the possibility of taking the dolls and stories to their Read Aloud classrooms. Cline and Baker were more than willing to join forces.

Cline and Dubnam visited a first-grade class at Crab Orchard Elementary with a handcrafted doll and read Debnam's original story about the doll's adventures to the students.

"The most meaningful part for me was the students' chance to view a piece of art right in their classroom that had been created locally in a collaboration of visual artists and storytellers," said Cline.

The children and teachers were delighted to see and hear the work of artists and storytellers firsthand. The impact was evident as Cline noted that after they visited the classrooms, one student produced a story at home and later brought it to school for Cline to read during one of her next Read Aloud visits.



Top: Ann Cline smiles with students at Crab Orchard Elementary after reading them the story of doll Cassiopeia; Bottom: Ruth Baker and students from Daniels Elementary get silly with a witch doll and her broom.

Cline also reads to fifth graders at Mabscott Elementary and said that after the art collaboration in those classrooms, several students and their families visited the Beckley Art Center for the first time.

Tamarack heard about this amazing community partnership and asked Debnam if the dolls exhibit could travel there for a special event on an October Sunday afternoon. The event included Read Aloud volunteers Cline and Baker reading the dolls' stories to children in attendance.

"Partnering with other local organizations and initiatives allows Read Aloud to magnify our impact and engage more fully in the local community," said Read Aloud West Virginia Executive Director Mary Kay Bond. "Our Raleigh County chapter has done an excellent job of building connections that serve our mission and the community well."

Book Review

***The Poet's Dog*, a book for the ages**

Reviewed by Jennie Fitzkee

"Dogs speak words. But only poets and children hear."

Those are the opening words in Patricia MacLachlan's new book, ***The Poet's Dog***. I have read the book twice, because there are many words not to be missed, words that are pure and don't need added adjectives and text. MacLachlan's writing stands alone in a field of masterful literature. Her 88 pages are some of the best I have ever read. In the words of the publisher: *"Alone in a fierce winter storm, Nickel and Flora are brave but afraid. A dog finds them. Teddy speaks words and brings them to shelter. The poet's cabin has light and food and love. But where is the poet? Teddy will tell the story of how words make poems and connect to those who hear each other."*

Sylvan the poet constantly reads to Teddy. He reads Yeats and Shakespeare. He also reads ***Charlotte's Web***, ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe***, and ***Ox Cart Man***. Teddy learns how words follow one another.

I had no idea that ***Ox Cart Man***, one of my favorite children's books, is actually a poem. I scrambled to find my copy and read the words again, this time seeing the words for what they are meant to be—a poem. When I read the book again to my preschoolers this month, it will be more beautiful than ever.

The Poet's Dog is a story of adventure, survival, love and friendship, of death, reading and poetry. The beginning is a fishing line that hooks the reader, and the ocean opens to... well, you will have to read the book. The ending is as surprising as ever.



I told a friend and fellow teacher about ***The Poet's Dog*** and quoted to her the first lines, "Dogs speak words. But only poets and children hear."

Our conversation went something like this:

"I hear my cat. I know what she's saying."

"Then you must be either a child or a poet."

"I'm a child. My heart is always a child. And I love poetry."

She smiled a knowing smile. I did, too.

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.

Many thanks to Charleston Area Medical Center for their recent contribution of \$500 to Read Aloud West Virginia. CAMC knows that health literacy is not possible without good reading skills and that we must work to raise children who can manage their own health well. Read Aloud's work plays an important role in the health of our communities and we are happy that CAMC acknowledged that relationship in this way!



**Charleston Area
Medical Center**

Read Aloud of Jackson County receives community grant

By Sara Busse

Two programs of the Jackson County Read Aloud chapter received a financial boost thanks to a \$2,500 grant from the Jackson County Community Foundation. Snuggle and Read and Snak Pak will each benefit from the grant.

Snuggle and Read encourages families to read together, providing books and blankets so participants can experience the pleasure that a warm blanket and a great read can bring when shared with a child. Several of these well-received events have been held at elementary schools and county libraries in Jackson County and throughout the state. The grant money will be used to purchase books for Snuggle and Read. Blankets are provided by Constellium Corporation (<http://www.constellium.com/>).

The Snak Pak program, according to Jackson County Read Aloud co-chair Lisa Bailey, is run by Parchment Valley Baptist Church, providing weekly snack packs to approximately 190 children who may need a little extra food during the weekends. Read Aloud is now adding the excitement of books.

"Mid-year last year, Read Aloud Jackson County started providing books with the snack packs on a once-a-month basis to the children so that they would also have their very own books to read," Bailey said. "While we may have shelves of books at our own home, some homes have very few books or no books at all. We have been receiving positive feedback from the schools about how excited the kids are to pick out their monthly book. They can hardly wait!"

Read Aloud West Virginia helped complete the grant application and is purchasing the books for the programs.

Lea Ann Tuohy, of the movie "The Blind Side" fame, spoke on "Making a Difference in the Life of a Child" at the Jackson County Community Foundation dinner in October when the awards were granted, according to Jackson co-chair Janet McCauley.

"The inspiring story of Michael Orr, a homeless child who was taken in and nurtured by the Tuohys and who became an NFL standout, emphasized the importance of stepping out of your comfort zone to help others," McCauley explained. Tuohy said she appreciated the connection with the work done by Read Aloud Jackson County.

McCauley said, "By providing both the Snuggle and Read project and the Snak Pak program with books, Jackson County Read Aloud is hoping to make a difference in the lives of many children. We were very pleased to be a recipient and that the monies have helped to meet our desire to get books in the hands of children."

To get involved in the Jackson County Read Aloud chapter, contact McCauley at jkmccauley@suddenlink.net or Bailey at lisa.bailey@suddenlink.net.

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



Members of the Jackson County Read Aloud Board receive a grant at the Jackson County Community Foundation dinner. Left to right: Hannah Hern, Cheryl Miller, Suzette Lowe, Chapter President Janet McCauley, Kerry Casto, and Linda Dickirson.

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.

Ross Foundation

(from page 1)

Foundation, recognizes the value of this type of investment. Ross, who is also involved with the West Virginia Nonprofit Association and Philanthropy West Virginia, has broad experience with what makes nonprofits successful. "I know many funders are hesitant to support overhead," Ross commented, but said he has come to realize that nonprofit organizations need financial resources to grow their programs, and things like quality staff and technology are critical to this success.

"Over the years," Ross noted, "I realized that 'what you get is what you pay for.' If you want to grow an organization and have it become a key player in the community, then you need to pay for that quality staff to implement programs." A Wall Street Journal article entitled, "Why Can't We Sell Charity Like We Sell Perfume?" reinforced his thoughts on nonprofit funding needs.



In 2013, three leading sources of information about U.S. charities—BBB Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Navigator, and GuideStar—jointly wrote an open letter to

charitable donors called "The Overhead Myth." After noting the tendency of donors to focus too much on the percentage of expenditures going toward administrative and fundraising costs when deciding which charities to support, they assert that many charities should actually spend more on overhead than they do, in areas such as training, planning, evaluation and internal systems to increase their charitable impact. The open letter includes some surprising statistics on the importance of spending on overhead, and the danger of underinvesting in the type of critical infrastructure that keeps a nonprofit healthy and successful. For more information on this joint letter, see <http://overheadmyth.com/>.

Read Aloud's programs, and their success, depend on educating parents, teachers, school administrators, and businesses about the critical importance of modeling the joy of reading to encourage children to *want* to learn to read. They also depend on recruiting, training, supporting, retaining, and tracking volunteer readers across West Virginia, and on creating, training, supporting, retaining, and sustaining strong county chapters (currently 30 and counting). Our "output," while including some tangible items like books to distribute, is largely reflected in intangibles: Read Aloud conferences which reenergize county chapters and volunteers and help them share ideas; schools which welcome volunteer readers into their classrooms; trained volunteer readers who dependably show up each week to share their love of books; and ultimately, in more children learning, and loving, to read. All these may then be reflected in rising reading scores in schools and counties which have vibrant Read Aloud programs. But none of this happens without mundane "overhead-type" investments—like upgraded database software.

The Ross Foundation "gets it." For this, we are exceedingly grateful.

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

Inspiration and Ideas

FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN LITERACY



Imagine a richer home library for all children

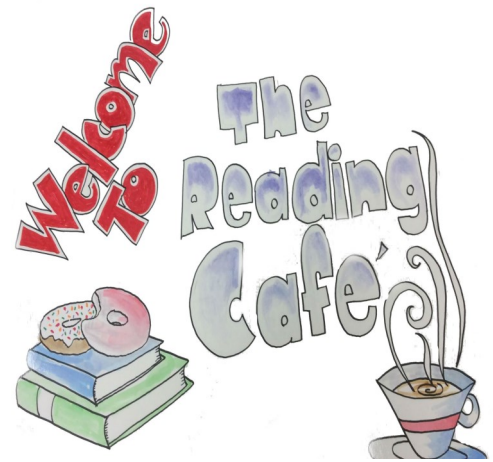
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library began providing free books to children ages birth to five in Tennessee in 1995. By partnering with local organizations, the program has grown to offer free books to more than one million children across America each month. Read Aloud West Virginia's Fayette County chapter worked with other local groups to bring the program to their area in 2016. To learn more or to see if the program is available near you, visit www.imaginationlibrary.com.

Feast on a buffet of books

At George C. Weimer Elementary School in St. Albans, Title I Reading Specialist Becky Ryder and Principal Pamela Snead are making great strides in creating an environment that places value on literacy and reading. One of their recent initiatives presented a "Book Tasting" to students and parents, offering various "courses" and "flavors" for each family to try together.

Here's how it worked: children and parents chose from a menu which included different genres of books and a selection of titles in each genre. They then read snippets together to get a feel for what they liked. Books were available for the children to choose and keep for their own personal libraries after the tasting.

Kudos to Becky, Pam and all of Weimer Elementary for their efforts in engaging families, school and community in literacy!



Special Event: Feast of Books!

Start a bookish conversation

Children get excited about the things they believe are valued by the adults they love and respect. That's why starting conversations about books and reading can be so beneficial. Imagine if kids heard as much about the book you are reading as they do about the favorite teams playing this weekend!

Read Aloud of Morgan County starts conversations by placing white boards in classes which display the current book(s) being read. Local news is even getting in on the chatter. In Jackson, Morgan, Pocahontas and Randolph counties, readers have been featured answering the question, "What are YOU reading?"

What are
YOU
Reading?



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Generation Read Aloud

Celebrating 30 Years of Reading!

March 20, 2017
5:30-7:30 PM

Paterno's at the Park
Charleston, WV



Read-A-Palooza 2017 celebrates 30 years of reading

It seems like everyone is talking about “The Greatest Generation” and “Generation Y” and “Gen X” lately. But Read Aloud West Virginia is celebrating Generation Read Aloud!

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Read Aloud—30 years of comprehensive, research-based and practice-proven programming throughout West Virginia. You can help commemorate this special anniversary by attending Read-A-Palooza 2017 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on March 20th at Paterno’s at the Park in Charleston.

The event will feature the stories of children, now adults, who benefited from the Read Aloud program in their early years. Many of those former students are now passing along their love of reading to their own children or as Read Aloud volunteers. Watch for some glimpses into these stories on social media throughout the upcoming weeks by following Read Aloud West Virginia on Facebook and @ReadAloudWV on Twitter.

Appetizers, drinks, a silent auction and great company will be the highlights of the Read-A-Palooza event. Committee members, led by chairman Hayley Woodrum, are gathering items for the silent auction, finalizing menu items and planning a fun, nostalgic atmosphere for the evening. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

Special thanks to the Signature Sponsors for Read-A-Palooza 2017, the Elliot Family Foundation and the BrickStreet Foundation. Their generous donations and other sponsorships and ticket sales will help continue the work of Read Aloud throughout the year and across the state.

Tickets for the annual fundraiser are \$40 and can be purchased online at www.readaloudwestvirginia.org or by calling 304-345-5212.

Contact Us

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Share your Read Aloud memories!

#GenerationReadAloud #ReadAloudWV30